THE WONDER HAT and Other One Act Plays

KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN *and* BEN HECHT

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BY

KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN
and BEN HECHT

PREFATORY NOTE BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

Of the plays in this book, "The Wonder Hat" needs least introduction to the players of the community groups which carry on, unwittingly perhaps, the tradition of the Italian Comedy of Masks. The fascinating idea of a theater of known and marked types—or Masks—is felt by every experimenter in the field of drama. The difficulty is to find a play that will carry over to the audience the irresponsible dash and gaiety which one attributes to the *Commedia dell' Arte* characters—especially when one lacks the impossibly facile technic of the old Italian companies. The historic sojourn of the Masks in Paris did something to soften their edges, and to give them a moonlit and poetic cast of thought that Ruzzante or Carlo Gozzi would never recognize. Their exile in the service of the English Pantomime still further eclipsed their glitter. The virtue of "The Wonder Hat" lies in the recovery of the harlequinade pace and spirit and deviltry. Pierrot moaning his lyrical love beneath the moon can go far to empty the littlest theater; but Pierrot as here conceived, befooled by the magic boot and lacerated by an invisible Harlequin with a hat pin—Carlo Gozzi would have applauded him.

The present form of the play, differing slightly from its early published version, is that given it in the last revision made by the authors while Kenneth Goodman lived. Like all his revisions, it reduced the number of words in the play; and in this case provided an ending

without the use of "plants" in the audience, which he always felt to be somewhat out of key with the method of the Masks.

The two plays dealing with the adventures of the French spy, Henri Durot, were part of a plan for an evening of such episodes. At the time of their production, the war seemed to enthrall Kenneth Goodman's imagination; and Ben Hecht's study at the moment was in the tense ranges of melodrama. "The Two Lamps" and "The Hand of Siva" resulted. Both are good theater. The native drums in "The Hand of Siva" may not have been a new device, but it seemed very fresh and thrilling when we produced the play at the Carnegie Tech Theater in the season of 1915-16; any number of drums have been beaten through whole plays since then, but the device still holds. I never knew whether it was contributed by Kenneth Goodman or Ben Hecht. But it was so with most of Goodman's collaborated plays—they come out at the end with his positive characteristics of form and structure—with a beginning, a middle and an end, which is a more complete equipment than most short plays can boast; but when you were through you never knew what each author had put in—the fusion was so complete.

"The Hero of Santa Maria," which enlivened the fourth bill of the Washington Square Players in their first season at the Comedy Theater, was evidently a Goodman play in its inception; just as the "Idyll of the Shops" and the other richly alive Ghetto episodes of the series to which it belonged were, in matter if not in form, Mr. Hecht's contribution. Both went through this collaborative fire, however, and came out with no visible prints of an author's thumb to blur the thought

and image of characters that speak, with arc-light clearness, for themselves.

By the time this book is in the hands of its readers, many of whom will be its actors, the new theater of the Chicago Art Institute, dedicated to the memory of Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, will be a reality, to be welcomed and cherished by all those who felt the impress of his generous talents. Its larger civic purposes will be colored by the same patient devotion to the purposes of fine craftsmanship as the plays he wrote, alone or in company; purposes phrased in a line of his which we have carved in stone above the doorway: "To restore the old visions and to win the new" and in another, above the proscenium: "You yourselves must set flame to the fagots which you have brought." What better word from the playwright to his audience: or from the author to his readers?

THOMAS WOOD STEVENS

THE GOODMAN THEATER,
Chicago.

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THE WONDER HAT

CHARACTERS

HARLEQUIN
PIERROT
PUNCHINELLO
COLUMBINE
MARGOT

"The Wonder Hat" was originally produced at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit, Michigan, in 1916.

Set designed by Sam Hume

NOTICE: The text of "The Wonder Hat" as given in this edition represents the final revision of the play by the authors.

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THE WONDER HAT

The SCENE *is a park by moonlight. The stage setting is shallow. At the back center is a formal fountain, backed by a short wall about seven feet high with urns at its two ends. At each side of the fountain, low groups of shrubbery. There is a clear space between the fountain and the back drop so that the characters may pass around the shrubbery and the fountain. The back drop represents a night sky with an abnormally large and yellow moon. A path crosses the stage parallel to the footlights.*

As the curtain rises, HARLEQUIN *and* PIERROT *saunter in from the left, arm in arm. They both have on long cloaks, and are swinging light canes with an air of elegant ennui. They pause in the center of the stage.*

HARLEQUIN (*indicating with a wave of his cane*)
Dear fellow, this is a circular path. It runs quite around the outer edge of the park. It delights me. I always spend my evenings here. One can walk for hours with the absolute certainty of never getting anywhere.

PIERROT (*removing his eyeglass*)
Dear chap, in these days of suburban progress, I had not supposed such a place possible.

HARLEQUIN
Also, as you may have noticed, all the promenaders

move continuously in the same direction. It is, therefore, only necessary to maintain an even pace in order to avoid making acquaintances.

PIERROT (*with a slight yawn*)
One might retrace one's steps?

HARLEQUIN
It has been tried by certain elderly roués and ladies from the opera, but always with disastrous results. Our best people no longer attempt it.

PIERROT
Tell me, does Columbine ever come here?

HARLEQUIN (*becoming serious*)
That is the one drawback. She comes here very often.

PIERROT (*snappishly*)
Humph! That really is annoying, deucedly, devilishly, foolishly annoying!

HARLEQUIN
You're very emphatic.

PIERROT (*still more snappishly*)
I have never liked that woman, in spite of what the poets say about us.

HARLEQUIN (*looking about cautiously*)
By keeping a sharp lookout, I have thus far managed to avoid her myself.

PIERROT (*pleased*)
I see that we are both confirmed bachelors. We agree perfectly.

HARLEQUIN
On the contrary, we don't agree at all! Because you

dislike Columbine, you're too confounded polite to others. You make cynical love to all sorts of women, and nobody likes you for it. On the other hand, I adore her and make love to nobody at all. For that reason I am simply overwhelmed with dinner invitations.

PIERROT

Then why don't you catch up with her some evening and tell her so?

HARLEQUIN (*preening himself*)

Gross materialist! She would certainly fall in love with me.

PIERROT (*with equal self-satisfaction*)

At least I should be spared the possibility of her falling in love with me.

HARLEQUIN

How selfish of you! But, come, if you are quite rested, let us continue our walk.

PIERROT

To be perfectly frank, dear chap, I find myself extremely sleepy.

HARLEQUIN (*haughtily*)

There is a beautiful stone bench just beyond that clump of lilacs.

PIERROT (*with a yawn*)

Thanks. When we reach it, I shall sit down.

HARLEQUIN

By all means, dear fellow. I can then resume my stroll without the effort of conversation.

(*They saunter off, arm in arm, toward the right.* PUNCHINELLO *enters, dressed in a long ragged green coat and carrying a large sack and little bell. He wears long whiskers and a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles. He advances, tapping before him with a staff and ringing his little bell.*)

PUNCHINELLO (*in a whining sing-song*)

New loves for old! New loves for old! I will buy broken ambitions, wasted lives, cork legs, rejected poems, unfinished plays, bottles, bootjacks, and worn-out religions! (*He drops his pack.*) Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! New loves for old! New loves for old! (*He wags his head, listening.*) Nobody here! I've walked three times 'round this accursed park. I've seen moon-faced boys asleep on stone benches, stone Tritons blowing water into the air, and a rabble of sick-looking poets and silly-looking girls all walking in the same direction. But not one bona-fide customer! I'll sit down. Yes, yes, I'll sit down, curse them, and ease this infernal crick in my back. (*He unfolds a little camp stool which he carries, slung by a strap, and sits down.* COLUMBINE *and* MARGOT *enter from the left and advance timidly to the center of the stage without noticing* PUNCHINELLO.)

COLUMBINE (*very much excited*)

I'm sure, Margot, that I saw him here only a moment ago.

MARGOT

Do you want my honest opinion, Mistress Columbine?

COLUMBINE (*stamping her foot*)

How can an opinion be anything but honest? An opinion is naturally and automatically honest.

MARGOT

Mine ain't, ma'am. I always formulates my opinions to conform.

COLUMBINE

I don't want them. I'm miserable. I'm wretched.

MARGOT (*severely*)

Then I won't give them to you. But if you'd act more like a lady and stop trapesing around in the damp of the night trying to scrape an acquaintance with—with this Harlequin, who, God knows, may have six or seven wives already—

COLUMBINE

I'm not trapesing after him!

PUNCHINELLO (*in his sing-song voice*)

New loves for old! New loves for old!

COLUMBINE (*frightened*)

Oh, how you startled me!

PUNCHINELLO (*rubbing his hands*)

Bargains, cheap, wonderful bargains. What will the lady buy? Something for her parlor? Something for her bedroom? Something for herself? Wall paper, egg beaters, canary birds, salt shakers, oriental rugs, corset covers, diamonds, water bags, churns, potato peelers, hats, shoes, gas fixtures, new—old—bargains, lady, bargains?

COLUMBINE

No, no, no! I don't want to buy anything.

PUNCHINELLO (*kneeling and spreading out his wares*)
I have cures to sell, and charms.

COLUMBINE (*fascinated in spite of herself*)
What—what charms have you?

PUNCHINELLO
Ho, ho! I have a charm to ward off evil spirits.

MARGOT (*in disgust*)
Get along with you!

PUNCHINELLO
Ha, ha! Against nightmares, then; against mice, toothaches, bunions, burglars, and broken legs.

COLUMBINE
I don't want them—any of them.

PUNCHINELLO (*wagging his head*)
Ho, ho! Ha, ha! Then you're in love. You want a love charm.

COLUMBINE (*stamping her foot*)
You're impudent! I tell you I'm not in love.

MARGOT (*beginning to be interested*)
What makes you pipe her off as being in love?

PUNCHINELLO
A lady who isn't interested in mice, bunions, or burglars, must be in love. There's no two ways about it.

MARGOT
What about the broken legs and toothaches?

PUNCHINELLO (*spreading his hands*)
I just put that in for good measure.

COLUMBINE
Enough! I won't listen to you; I—I'm not in love!

PUNCHINELLO
I can remedy that with a charm.

COLUMBINE (*almost in tears*)
I don't want your charms. I don't want to be in love. I hate him. I hate him. I hate him. So there!

PUNCHINELLO
Yes, yes, pretty lady. I know that sort of talk very well. But I have also a charm to attract love.

COLUMBINE (*brightening immediately*)
You have a charm to attract love?

PUNCHINELLO
It will bring all men to you; little men, big men, pretty men, noble men, fat men—

COLUMBINE (*clasping her hands*)
I want only one man—only Harlequin.

MARGOT (*interrupting*)
If you want my opinion, ma'am—

COLUMBINE
But I don't. I want the charm.

MARGOT
I'd leave this fellow's stuff alone, if I was you.

COLUMBINE
But you're not me. I want the charm.

PUNCHINELLO (*searching through his wares*)
It will bring Harlequin to you with the rest.

COLUMBINE (*on tiptoe with eagerness*)
Quick! Give it to me.

PUNCHINELLO (*taking an old slipper from his pocket*)

Ho, ho! Here it is. An old slipper! Each stitch of it more effective than Sappho's complete works. Each thread more potent than the burning caresses of Dido. They say Cinderella wore a crystal slipper. It's a lie. This—this, is what she wore. Ah, ha! look at it!

COLUMBINE (*taken aback*)

Do I have to wear *that?*

MARGOT (*scornfully*)

Land's sake, it's all run down at the heel.

PUNCHINELLO

That's because it has been worn so often. Semiramis of Babylon, Laïs of Corinth, and Thaïs of Alexandria, all wore this boot.

MARGOT (*with a sniff*)

Them names don't sound like respectable ladies, to my way of thinking.

COLUMBINE (*dubiously*)

It looks very old. Are you sure it has been fumigated?

PUNCHINELLO

It's no older than the light it has kindled in a thousand eyes. Cleopatra of Egypt abetted the lures of her person with this same ragged boot. Mary of Scotland, and a hundred other beauties of history have inspired the enraptured supplications of their adorers with no more tangible asset than this homely boot. Put it on, pretty lady, and all men will flock to your feet, especially to the foot that wears the slipper.

(*He hands* COLUMBINE *the slipper.*)

COLUMBINE
Ooh, ooh! How wonderful!

MARGOT (*with a superior air*)
Take my word, miss, it'll be a nuisance to you.

COLUMBINE
I don't care. I'm going to teach Harlequin a lesson he won't forget.
(*She takes off her own shoe, hopping on one foot and holding to* MARGOT'S *arm. She then puts on the magic slipper.*)

MARGOT
Mind, I warned you now.

COLUMBINE (*stamping her foot down*)
There! It doesn't look so badly once you get it on.

PUNCHINELLO (*groveling on his knees, his hands clasped*)
Oh, most wonderful lady! Oh, most beautiful, most gracious, most divine lady!

MARGOT (*amazed at* PUNCHINELLO'S *sudden fervor*)
Lord love us! What's got into the old bag of bones?

PUNCHINELLO (*to* COLUMBINE)
You have melted the lump of ice in my old breast. I am young again. I can hear birds singing, and sweet waters falling.

MARGOT (*to* PUNCHINELLO)
Get up this minute before I burst a lung bawling for help.

COLUMBINE (*dancing up and down with delight*)
Oh, oh, oh! Now I know it works!

MARGOT

Just the same, he ought to know better, the old grampus.

PUNCHINELLO

I love you.

COLUMBINE (*demurely*)

That's very nice in you, of course, but please get up—tell me how much I owe you.

PUNCHINELLO (*still on his knees*)

With all my heart, with all my soul!

MARGOT

Don't you hear her? How much does she owe you for the magic slipper?

PUNCHINELLO (*still groveling*)

Nothing! Nothing! You owe me nothing at all! I will give you everything in my pack, all my bargains, all my spells, all my charms. I will make you a witch.

MARGOT

She don't want to be a witch! She wouldn't touch them with the tip of a barge pole.

COLUMBINE (*to* MARGOT)

I really think I ought to pay him.

MARGOT

If he won't take anything, he won't. That's all there is to it.

PUNCHINELLO

Speak to me! My heart is bursting.

MARGOT

Let it burst, then. Come, ma'am.

COLUMBINE

Yes, yes. Let's run.

(COLUMBINE *takes* MARGOT *by the hand and they run off to the right, laughing.*)

PUNCHINELLO (*attempting to rise*)

Wait! Wait! I—I—Oh, confound this stitch in my side! (*As the girls' voices die away, he struggles to his feet and rubs his head in a dazed sort of way.*) Gone! What have I done? By the seven witches of Beelzebub, by the long-fanged mother of the Great Green Spider, I've been tricked, cheated. (*He shakes his staff.*) Curses on her golden head! May she have nightmares and toothache. May—Old fool! A blight on my whiskers! Woe! Woe! I've given my darling slipper away for nothing.

(*He sits down again on his camp stool and rocks to and fro, muttering.* HARLEQUIN, *having completed his circle of the park, enters from the left. He is smoking a cigarette and strolls along wearing a gloomy and troubled expression.* PUNCHINELLO *sees him and resumes his whining chant.*)

PUNCHINELLO

New loves for old! New loves for old! Bargains in cast-off sweethearts, old coats, umbrellas, glove buttoners, and household pets. Bargains, sir, bargains! Cheap, wonderful bargains. (HARLEQUIN *passes and regards* PUNCHINELLO *with absolute indifference.*) I have pipes, swords, hosiery, snuff boxes, underwear, wines, trinkets for beautiful ladies, furniture, spy glasses, goldfish, motor cars, and bottle openers.

HARLEQUIN (*impatiently*)
I want none of your bargains.

PUNCHINELLO
I have magic bargains, sir. Spells and charms.

HARLEQUIN
Ah! more like it! You have charms, eh? What kind of charms?

PUNCHINELLO
I have charms against bunions, burglars, broken legs, nightmares, stomachaches, and hangnails.

HARLEQUIN
Ordinary trash! I don't want them.

PUNCHINELLO (*looking furtively about*)
I have a love charm.

HARLEQUIN (*in alarm*)
God forbid!

PUNCHINELLO (*rubbing his hands*)
Ho, ho! He, he!

HARLEQUIN
Have you by any chance a charm against love? Aye, more, have you some efficacious armor against womankind in general?

PUNCHINELLO
Ho, ho! A man after my own heart, a cautious man. A sensible man.

HARLEQUIN (*loftily*)
Know you, antiquated panderer, that everywhere I go, women follow me. They stalk me. They covet me. They make my days miserable. They haunt my

sleep. They simper about me, wink at me; rub against me like silken cats. (*With vexation.*) Ah, I would almost end my life from very irritation. And the damnable part of it is that I know myself to be susceptible.

PUNCHINELLO (*slyly*)

There is no charm in the world against falling in love, but I can sell you a powder, which, tossed in the air, will bring destruction to women alone.

HARLEQUIN (*rubbing his chin doubtfully*)

No—That's too brutal. I couldn't kill them all even if I wanted to. And what use then to destroy a hundred, a thousand, even a million women, and have one sneak up behind you and get you after all? It would be an effort wasted. Love is inevitable.

PUNCHINELLO

Wait! Ho, ho! I have it, the very thing! If one cannot remove the inevitable, at any rate one may hide from it. What doesn't see you, can't get you. Ha, ha! I can sell you a hat.

HARLEQUIN

I am not in the market for a hat.

PUNCHINELLO (*triumphantly*)

But a magic hat! Ho, such a hat! A wonder hat! It will make you invisible.

HARLEQUIN (*incredulously*)

Invisible?

PUNCHINELLO (*fishing in his bag*)

When you put it on, you will exist only in your own mind. You will escape the pernicious sentimentality,

the never-ending blandishments, the strategic coquetry—

HARLEQUIN (*eagerly*)

Quick, you millinery sorcerer! You have convinced me. Invisibility is the one thing I crave to make me sublimely happy. Splendid! They shall never simper at me again, never rub against me again, never undulate before my tormented eyes. I will buy it.

PUNCHINELLO (*holding up the hat*)

Is it not a creation?

HARLEQUIN (*looking at the hat with distaste*)

God, what a thing to wear! I would not wear it, you may be sure, were it not invisible. Any man would prefer not to be seen in such a hat.

PUNCHINELLO

It may be unlovely in outline, coarse in texture, unrefined in color, but there is only one other such hat in the world. It belongs to the grand Lama of Thibet. Ha, ha! This one will cost you gold.

HARLEQUIN (*cautiously*)

But first I must see if it is really a wonder hat.

PUNCHINELLO

I will put it on.

(*He does so.*)

HARLEQUIN (*delighted*)

A miracle! Where are you?

PUNCHINELLO (*removing the hat with a flourish*)

Now, behold me! Here I am.

HARLEQUIN

Bravo! What wonders I will do with that hat!

But stay! What if the hat is only charmed for you? What if the charm does not apply to me?

PUNCHINELLO

You shall try it yourself. Put it on.
(HARLEQUIN *takes the hat and puts it on.*)

HARLEQUIN

Can you see me?

PUNCHINELLO

By St. Peter of Padua, not a speck of you!
(*He gropes with his hands, then strikes out with his staff and strikes* HARLEQUIN *in the shins.*)

HARLEQUIN (*hopping up and down*)

Ooh! Ouch!

PUNCHINELLO

Ho, ho! Pardon me. You see you are quite invisible.

HARLEQUIN

But not invulnerable!
(*He rubs his shins.*)

PUNCHINELLO

How much will you give me for this wonder hat?

HARLEQUIN

Are you sure you can't see me?

PUNCHINELLO (*rubbing his hands*)

You are one with the thin air and the fairies that inhabit it.

HARLEQUIN

There's no uncanny trick by which Columbine can discover me?

PUNCHINELLO

None. None. I swear it. It's only by your voice that I know where you are.

PUNCHINELLO (*he swings out with his staff.* HARLEQUIN *leaps nimbly aside*)

For years I have treasured this wonder hat. A blind woman with seven teeth and one eye made it in a haunted hut. It was cooked over a fire of serpent skins. (*As* PUNCHINELLO *speaks,* HARLEQUIN *tiptoes away to the right around the central group of shrubbery.*) Ho, ho! There's no charm like it to be had from one peak of the world to the other. (*He swings out again with his staff.* HARLEQUIN, *who has been peeping at him over the shrubbery, disappears behind the fountain.*) Five bags of gold, sir. Cheap—a bargain! Hey! (*He swings his staff.*) Hey! Hey! Where are you? Take off my hat. Give me back my hat! (*He stands still and listens.*) Thief! Thief! He's gone—vanished. Oh, what a fool! First my magic slipper, worth fifty pots of gold. What a doddering idiot! I've been cheated again, robbed, plundered! Oh, what a stitch in my side! Oh, oh! (*He gathers up his pack hurriedly, then stops and taps the side of his nose with his finger.*) Ho, ho! A thought! What a pair of lovers they will make. She with her slipper. He with his hat. She said Harlequin. He said Columbine. Yes, yes! I shall have my reward. They are the fools, not I. As if love were not enough magic of itself. Ho, ho, ho! I must follow her. Ho, ho! She went this way.

(*He moves off to the right, leaving his camp stool.*

HARLEQUIN *appears again around the left end of the shrubbery and advances cautiously to the center of the stage.*)

HARLEQUIN (*looking after* PUNCHINELLO)

I detest the idea of cheating anybody. But of course, one can't be running after trades people, pressing money on them. It simply isn't done. (*He looks in the other direction.*) Columbine should have made the round of the park by this time. What's keeping her? Confound it, here I am waiting for her as safe and invisible as the angels themselves. (*He sits down on the camp stool and holds his hand before his face.*) No, I can't see it. I wonder if I have a hand, or a leg, or a stomach, or a heart? If I don't take off my hat and look at myself, I shall soon become a total stranger to myself. What a wonder hat! (*There is a sound of women's voices in the distance. He pricks up his ears.*) Ah, her voice! Like the tinkling of silver bells in a shrine of ivory. Like the patter of crystal rain in a pool of scarlet lilies. (*He slaps his leg.*) Ah, ha! I'm in love! In love, by gad! to the tips of where my fingers ought to be. (*He becomes serious.*) If I take off my hat, I'd be lost. She would pounce on me, and being in love, I should pounce back. My hat must stay on. I will tie it on. I will nail it on. Curse me if I take off my hat. (*He pulls the hat down to the tops of his ears, then clasps his hands.*) Ah, to sit by her, safe and unseen! To bask in the splendor of her presence! To love and be loved only as a dream! To be free from all material entanglements and responsibilities! To touch her with invisible

fingers and permit the stolen thrills to course up and down my invisible spine!

(*He sings to the "A Wandering Minstrel" air.*)

A love-sick atom I,
A thing unseen and seeing,
For in my hat am I
A hypothetical being.

(*He suddenly has a new thought.*)

But what if, being unable to see me, she should fall in love with somebody else? That vapid ass, Pierrot, for instance? Oh, God, what if he should strike fire in her heart? But I will not take off my hat! Kind heaven, give me strength to keep my hat on.

(*He pulls the hat still further down over his ears, just as* COLUMBINE *and* MARGOT *enter from the left.*)

COLUMBINE (*to* MARGOT)

This is too much! Did you ever see such a rabble?

MARGOT

I shouldn't be so particular, miss, seeing as how you brought it on yourself.

COLUMBINE

They've risen from every bench to follow me. They've come from every corner of the park; burglars, doctors, poets, whiskered Don Juans, rumbling Romeos. Great heavens, the idiots! If they hadn't fallen to fighting among themselves, we'd have been trampled to death. I—I hope they exterminate each other.

(HARLEQUIN *seeing* COLUMBINE *in such an angry mood, rises cautiously, and in so doing, upsets the*

camp stool. He stands trembling and holding on to his hat.)

MARGOT (*starting*)
Bless me, what's that?
(COLUMBINE *and* MARGOT *both look around. Their eyes pass over* HARLEQUIN *without seeing him.*)

COLUMBINE
Nothing! There's nobody here.
(*Evidently much relieved,* HARLEQUIN *tiptoes to the right end of the fountain.*)

MARGOT
If you want my honest opinion, miss—

COLUMBINE (*stamping her foot*)
How many times must I tell you—

MARGOT
Be careful with that magic boot, miss.

COLUMBINE
Drat the magic boot! What's the good of it? It's brought me nothing but trouble.

MARGOT
Well, what did you expect?

COLUMBINE (*almost weeping*)
It hasn't brought him. It hasn't brought Harlequin.

MARGOT
If you want my opinion, miss, honest or otherwise—

COLUMBINE (*stamping her foot again*)
I don't!

MARGOT
Then I won't give it to you.

COLUMBINE

Oh, Margot, be gentle with me. I love him, and—and I'm dreadfully uncomfortable about it.

MARGOT

Well, there's worse discomfort. There's clergyman's sore throat, for instance, and housemaid's knee.

COLUMBINE (*clinching her hands*)

Oh, if I could only see him now, the cold-hearted fish! I'd fix him. I'd melt his icy blood for him! (HARLEQUIN *holds tight to his hat.*)

MARGOT (*soothingly*)

Of course, of course, you would.

COLUMBINE

But he can't escape. I will marry him. I'll marry him. I'll have him for my own, locked under key in a house; a beautiful little house, all new and spick and span, with white trimmings and green shutters.

MARGOT

If I may put in a word for myself, miss, I hope you won't have a basement kitchen.

COLUMBINE (*spitefully*)

But I'll make him suffer first. I'll—I'll—
(HARLEQUIN *jams his hat down tighter and disappears behind the fountain.*)

MARGOT

If you must get het up and stamp, miss, I'd advise you to confine your stamping to the foot which ain't got the magic boot on.

COLUMBINE

Margot, were you ever in love?

MARGOT

There are opinions concerning that question, miss, honest and otherwise.

COLUMBINE

Hush! Some one's coming.

(PIERROT *enters disheveled and breathless. He advances and flings himself on one knee before* COLUMBINE.)

PIERROT

At last! Exquisite Columbine, ravishing vision, I have overcome my rivals. I have vanquished a legion of your adorers.

(HARLEQUIN *peeps around the left side of the fountain.*)

MARGOT (*to* PIERROT)

Lord love us! You look as though you'd been run through a threshing machine.

PIERROT

I have. I kicked Scaramouche in the stomach and pushed the Doctor of Bologna into a lily pond. Divine Circe, I have come to claim my reward.

(*He clutches the edge of* COLUMBINE'S *dress.*)

COLUMBINE

Get up this instant! You're tearing the trimming off my petticoat.

PIERROT

Columbine, Columbine. I love you!

MARGOT (*taking* PIERROT'S *arm and pulling him to his feet*)

Get up, you great baby!

(HARLEQUIN *tiptoes across the stage and stands behind* MARGOT *and* PIERROT.)

PIERROT (*clasping his hands*)
I love you, Columbine! Listen to me!

COLUMBINE (*haughtily*)
This is a very sudden change on your part, Mr. Pierrot. Yesterday you snubbed me quite openly.

PIERROT
Forgive me. I was blind. I was a dolt. I have only just now come to my senses.

MARGOT (*turning her shoulder to him and folding her arms*)
You'll come to something worse presently.

PIERROT (*to* COLUMBINE)
I love you—I love you—
(HARLEQUIN *reaches out and deftly extracts a long hat pin from the back of* MARGOT'S *cap.* MARGOT *puts her hands to her head and turns fiercely on* PIERROT.)

MARGOT
How dast you grab my hat?

PIERROT (*in astonishment*)
I never touched your hat.

MARGOT
You did.

PIERROT (*turning on her*)
I—I did nothing of the sort.

MARGOT
There's laws to cover this kind of thing—annoying women in a public park.

PIERROT

You're an impudent hussy.

MARGOT

You're nothing but a common, ordinary home wrecker.

(HARLEQUIN *approaches* COLUMBINE *and gently touches her hair.* PIERROT *and* MARGOT *glare at each other.*)

COLUMBINE (*clasping her hands*)

Margot, Margot, it's wonderful! It's divine! I feel as if the air were suddenly full of kisses.

(HARLEQUIN *strikes an attitude of complete satisfaction.*)

MARGOT

It's full of dampness and nasty language, that's what it is.

(*She gives* PIERROT *a venomous look.*)

PIERROT (*again falling on his knees and addressing* COLUMBINE)

It's full of the unspeakable ecstacy of my admiration.

COLUMBINE (*paying no attention to* PIERROT)

It's full of marvelously shy caresses! They are like the wings of happy butterflies, brushing white lilac blooms!

PIERROT

Ah, what did I tell you? The love I offer you is a gift, a treasure.

COLUMBINE (*her hands still clasped*)

I can almost feel invisible lips sighing my name—his lips—Harlequin's lips.

PIERROT (*straightening up on his knees*)
What's that you say about Harlequin?

MARGOT
It's none of your business.

PIERROT (*spitefully*)
Good God! To think of intruding that fellow's name at a time like this. Why, the chap's a positive bounder. He has no taste, no education, no refinement. And his face—ugh! He'd frighten himself to death if he looked in a mirror before his barber got to him in the morning. (HARLEQUIN *steps behind* PIERROT *and prods him in the back with the hat pin.*) Ooh, Ouch! (*He springs to his feet and turns on* MARGOT, *shaking his finger in her face.*) You—you did that. You—you know you did.

MARGOT (*taken aback*)
Did what?

PIERROT (*in a rage*)
You—you stabbed me in the back, and don't you deny it.

MARGOT
The man's stark, staring mad!

COLUMBINE (*to* PIERROT *in an icy voice*)
Will you be good enough to explain what's the matter with you?

PIERROT (*his eye still on* MARGOT)
I've been attacked, lacerated.

MARGOT
If you don't behave yourself, I'll give you something to howl about.

PIERROT (*again falling at* COLUMBINE'S *feet*)
But it's nothing—nothing to the torments I suffer from your heartlessness. Nothing to the—
(HARLEQUIN *stabs him again with the hat pin.*)

PIERROT
Ouch! Wow! Hell's fire! Animals! (*He claps his hand to the spot.*) I'm being bitten to death!

MARGOT
And a good riddance, too!

COLUMBINE
Come, Margot! I won't stay here! I won't be insulted!

PIERROT (*again grasping the hem of her dress*)
No, no! I'll suffer everything. I'll suffer in silence. Only don't leave me. Speak to me. I love you. I—

COLUMBINE
I'll scream for help.

MARGOT
If you really want help, miss, it's my advice, take off the slipper.
(HARLEQUIN, *who has been about to attack* PIERROT, *hesitates and looks puzzled.*)

COLUMBINE
Yes, yes. Why didn't I think of it?
(*She whips off the magic slipper and holds it in her hand. The moment the slipper leaves her foot* PIERROT *sits back on his haunches and lets go the edge of* COLUMBINE'S *dress.*)

PIERROT (*in a feeble voice*)
I love you. I— (*He rubs his head.*) By Jove, this is most extraordinary!

MARGOT (*clapping her hands*)
Toss it to me, miss.
(COLUMBINE *tosses the slipper to* MARGOT.)

MARGOT (*examining the slipper*)
What a rummy slipper! (*She takes off her shoe.*) I wonder what's inside of it? Love? (*She puts the magic slipper on her own foot.*) Ooh! How it tickles!
(PIERROT *rises from his knees and looks helplessly from* COLUMBINE *to* MARGOT.)

COLUMBINE (*to* PIERROT)
Well, Mr. Pierrot?

PIERROT (*completely puzzled*)
I am quite at a loss to explain my feelings.
(*He hesitates, then turns and kneels before* MARGOT. HARLEQUIN *appears even more puzzled. He is also drawn toward* MARGOT *by the spell of the slipper, but his natural infatuation for* COLUMBINE *seems to neutralize the effect of the charm. He is visibly perplexed.*)

PIERROT
Incomparable Margot! Queen among housemaids! Divine custodian of my deepest affection.

MARGOT (*to* COLUMBINE)
You see, miss, the gentleman is now in love with me.

COLUMBINE
Disgusting!

PIERROT
I am drawn by some irresistible power of fascination. I—I belong to you utterly.

MARGOT

You belong in jail. You're nothing but a—a shameless affinity.

PIERROT (*clinging to the hem of* MARGOT'*s skirt*)

I love you! I swear it!

MARGOT (*weakening*)

Oh, la, la! Listen to the man talk!

COLUMBINE (*to* MARGOT)

You're a brazen hussy to take advantage of your social superior.

MARGOT (*haughtily*)

My superior? Him?

COLUMBINE (*stamping her foot*)

You're forgetting your place!

PIERROT

I love you—I love you—

MARGOT (*slyly*)

Suppose, miss, I was to say I believed every word he says to me.

COLUMBINE

I'd say you were an artful designing minx. I'd discharge you without a shred of character.

MARGOT

Well, you won't have to—because, I ain't going to say it.

PIERROT (*making another grab at her skirts*)

You must listen to me! You must! (HARLEQUIN *stabs him once more with the hat pin.*) Ouch! Wow! This is terrible. I love you!

MARGOT (*to* PIERROT)

Hey! Get up! A woman what works for a living can't afford to have her good nerves shattered for her!

(*She tries to shake off* PIERROT.)

COLUMBINE

Give me back the slipper, this instant.

MARGOT

You're welcome to it, I'm sure. (*She snatches off the slipper and tosses it away from her.* COLUMBINE *picks it up, but does not put in on.*) Now will you leave go of me?

(*He releases her in a dazed way.*)

PIERROT (*weakly*)

I—I love you. I—

(*He rises and again looks from one to the other.* COLUMBINE *holds the slipper in her hand.*)

COLUMBINE (*to* PIERROT)

Well, sir?

MARGOT

Well?

PIERROT (*adjusting his collar and speaking quite calmly*)

I consider myself fortunate in having escaped you both. I see now that there is something deadly about that slipper. To think that a man of my intellectual and artistic attainments should have been affected by such a trick. In love with a boot! How very trivial!

MARGOT

Well, what are you going to do now?

PIERROT

I don't know exactly. Perhaps I shall drown myself in the fountain.

(*He turns his back on* MARGOT *and* COLUMBINE *and assumes a pose of thoughtful indifference.* HARLEQUIN *again approaches* COLUMBINE.)

COLUMBINE

Oh, Margot! What shall I do? I'm faint. I'm intoxicated. He hasn't come and yet I feel as if he were near me, almost touching me. I feel all the exquisite certainty of love. Yes, yes, I love him! I love Harlequin, and I know that he loves me in return. I know it, and yet, and yet—

MARGOT

Yes, miss, and yet?

COLUMBINE (*wringing her hands*)

And yet I don't know what under heavens to do about it.

(HARLEQUIN *clasps his hands in an ecstasy of complete satisfaction.*)

MARGOT (*speaking apart to* COLUMBINE)

It's my advice, miss, put on the slipper again. What if it don't attract this here Harlequin? There's just as big perch in the puddle as ever came out of it. That's my motto. Besides, there is such a thing as making the right man jealous.

COLUMBINE (*brightening immediately*)

I believe you're right. I'll put on the slipper. I'll have a desperate flirtation with Pierrot. I'll take him everywhere with me. I'll dangle him before Harlequin's nose. (*She puts on the slipper and speaks archly.*) Mr. Pierrot.

PIERROT (*turning*)
Eh? I beg your pardon.

COLUMBINE
I—I don't want you to be angry with me.
(PIERROT *looks somewhat puzzled for a moment, then succumbs again to the spell of the slipper and rushes toward her.*)

PIERROT
I—I don't—I— (*He throws himself on his knees.*)
Columbine! My angel!

COLUMBINE (*shaking her finger at him*)
You were very rude to me a few moments ago. (HARLEQUIN *watches with puzzled interest.*) You accused me of having ensnared your affections by means of a charm.

PIERROT
I don't know anything about a charm. I am charmed only by your eyes, your lips, the flow of your voice.

COLUMBINE
Do you know, I think it's very sweet of you to say that.

PIERROT
I can say more, a thousand times more.

HARLEQUIN (*overcome by jealousy*)
I shall put a stop to this. (*He seems to come to a tremendous resolve.*) I—I shall take off my hat.

MARGOT
Lord have mercy! What is that?

PIERROT
My adored Columbine! You love me after all?

COLUMBINE (*archly*)
I haven't said so.

HARLEQUIN (*tugging frantically at his hat*)
My hat! A thousand devils! I can't get it off!

PIERROT (*rising*)
I'm your worshipper, your slave.

COLUMBINE
You may see me to my door.
(*She takes* PIERROT'S *arm.*)

HARLEQUIN (*frantically*)
Wait! Stop! Confound it, if I could only get my hat off!

MARGOT (*alarmed*)
I want to get away from here.

COLUMBINE (*listening*)
It's Harlequin's voice!

PIERROT
I don't see anybody.
(*They all look about them.* PUNCHINELLO *enters from the left with his pack on his back.*)

PUNCHINELLO
Ho, ho! ha, ha! There you are, eh? There you are. I've been looking for you.
(COLUMBINE *hastily snatches off her slipper and hides it behind her back. They all face* PUNCHINELLO. HARLEQUIN *tiptoes to one side and watches curiously.*)

COLUMBINE (*to* PUNCHINELLO)
What do you want?

PUNCHINELLO

What do I want, eh? You know very well what I want. I want my magic slipper, my magic slipper that you stole from me.

COLUMBINE

I didn't steal it. You gave it to me!

PUNCHINELLO

Ho, ho! That's a pretty story! Hee, hee! I gave it to you, eh? Well, I changed my mind.

COLUMBINE

I—I'm perfectly willing to pay you for it.

MARGOT

Don't you give him a cent, the miserable oyster.

COLUMBINE

How much do you want for it?

PUNCHINELLO (*rubbing his hands*)

I should think about ten bags of gold.

COLUMBINE

Ridiculous! There isn't so much money in the whole world.

PUNCHINELLO (*pointing to* PIERROT)

Perhaps this nice gentleman would like to buy it for you?

PIERROT

I— (*He looks at* COLUMBINE.) I have only the most casual acquaintance with this lady.

HARLEQUIN (*in a rage, to* PIERROT)

You infernal little cad! You—you—

(*He makes a move toward* PIERROT. *All back away from his voice except* PUNCHINELLO.)

PUNCHINELLO

Ho, ho! So you're there, too. Two birds with one stone. (*He rubs his hands.*) My magic slipper and my beloved wonder hat. Well, well, well! (HARLEQUIN *seeing that he has betrayed his presence, stands as if undecided what to do next.* PUNCHINELLO *strikes about him with his staff.*) Hey! Where are you? Take off my hat.

MARGOT

For the love of heaven, what is he raving about now?

PUNCHINELLO

My hat, my wonder hat! I sold it to Harlequin for five bags of gold—six bags of gold—

COLUMBINE

You sold it to Harlequin?

PUNCHINELLO

Aye, the ruffian, the highwayman. I sold it to him for only seven bags of gold. He clapped it on his head and now he's invisible.

COLUMBINE (*in delighted wonder*)

You really mean that Harlequin is here, near us? Oh, I knew it! I felt it!

PUNCHINELLO

Of course, he's here. Hey, you take off my hat! (*He swings his staff and* HARLEQUIN *again dances out of his way.*) Take off my hat or give me my eight bags of gold. Hey, thief!
(*He swings his staff again.*)

HARLEQUIN

I'm not a thief. I'd have paid you for your hat if

you hadn't run away in such a huff. Now, after the way you've acted, I shall take my own time about it.

COLUMBINE (*stamping her foot*)
Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN (*in a dubious voice*)
Ye—yes?

COLUMBINE
Take off that silly hat this minute.

HARLEQUIN
I—well—to tell you the truth, I—

COLUMBINE
Don't you hear what I'm saying? Give it back this second.

HARLEQUIN
I would first like some sort of assurance, some guaranty of good faith—some—

COLUMBINE
I'm not making any promises this evening.

HARLEQUIN (*plaintively*)
My dear Columbine, I have learned a good deal about my own feelings in the last half hour. I am perfectly willing to return this man's property and to submit to the ordinary and normal risks of your society. But I positively insist that, before I reveal myself, you must also return to him all and sundry charms, spells, et cetera, which might, if used either by accident or with malice aforethought, affect my own future course of action.

COLUMBINE (*remaining absolutely firm*)
I've told you once that I won't make any promises.

HARLEQUIN
Then, I remain invisible.

PUNCHINELLO
I tell you once more, give me back my hat.

HARLEQUIN (*folding his arms*)
No.

PUNCHINELLO
Ah, ha! Then I shall have my revenge! Know, miserable butterfly, that you are trifling with magic beyond your own powers of control. There is a terrible clause in the incorporation of this hat. Ho, ho! Listen! He who steals this wonder hat and places it upon his own head, cannot remove it again except in the presence and with the consent of its rightful owner. When I have left you, you will become for all time one with the interstellar atoms. You will never resume your mortal shape. You will haunt the cafés. You will moon about the boxes at the opera. You will sigh and pine in the wake of beautiful women, as futile and impalpable as a gust of summer wind. (*He picks up his pack.*) Ho, ho! Now will you give me back my hat?

HARLEQUIN (*with an evident effort at firmness*)
No! Not unless Columbine first returns the slipper.

PUNCHINELLO (*turning to* COLUMBINE)
Madam, I make my last appeal to you.

COLUMBINE (*folding her arms*)
Not unless Harlequin first returns the hat!
(PUNCHINELLO *looks from one to the other.*)

PUNCHINELLO

Come, ladies and gentlemen, I have urgent business elsewhere.

PIERROT

Might I suggest that the simplest way out of the dilemma would be for each of the principal parties to return the pilfered articles at the same exact moment?

PUNCHINELLO

Quite so! An excellent idea!

PIERROT

I shall count, and at the word three— Is that satisfactory to everybody?

HARLEQUIN (*doubtfully*)

Ye—yes.

COLUMBINE (*also doubtfully*)

Ye—yes.

PIERROT

Very well, then. One! (HARLEQUIN *begins to loosen the hat from his head.*) Two!

MARGOT (*stepping forward*)

Stop, everybody! You, Mistress Columbine, and you, invisible Mr. Harlequin. Because no matter what you do, somebody's bound to regret it. Don't interrupt me, ma'am, and you, wherever you are, keep your lid on and your mouth shut. I want to put it up to the kind ladies and gentlemen that have been studying this performance, and I asks them openly, what should be done at this point? Should Columbine give back the slipper or should she hang on to

what she's got? Should Harlequin take off his hat? Personally, my honest opinion is that the question can't be answered to suit everybody, so it's my advice that we ring down right here, and allow everybody to go home and fix up an ending to conform to the state of his own digestion.

PIERROT

But, you know, we're being paid to finish this thing.

HARLEQUIN

Paid? We're not working for money. We're working for love.

COLUMBINE

Love!

MARGOT

Aw, hell!

CURTAIN

THE TWO LAMPS

A MELODRAMA

CHARACTERS

Franz Koven.....*an Alsatian farmer*
Lise.....*his wife*
Jeannette.....*his daughter*
Henri Durot
Lieutenant Emil Ulrich.....*a Bavarian officer*
Captain Hans Lutgren.....*a Prussian officer*
A Bavarian Orderly
Two Prussian Soldiers

THE TWO LAMPS

The TIME *is an August evening in 1914. The* PLACE *is the main room of* FRANZ KOVEN'S *house. At the left is the main door of the house and near it a window opening in the same direction. At the back is a stairway. At the right is a fireplace with a kettle on the hob. In the angle between the fireplace and the stairway is a small door, and between the audience and the fireplace a small window with a ledge below it. There is a wooden table at left center with a lighted lamp on it. The lamp has a white shade. At the back under the stairway is a cupboard with dishes. On a shelf beside it are a bottle of brandy, some glasses, and an unlighted lamp with a red shade. There are small wooden chairs scattered about the room, and against the wall near the stairs is an old carbine.* LISE *sits near the fire knitting and* JEANNETTE *stands by the large window.*

LISE (*bitterly*)

They burned my father's house in seventy-one. We were French, then. Now, we're Germans, so they only rob us.

JEANNETTE (*at the window*)

They're out of sight, anyway.

LISE

As long as there are roads in the world, there'll be soldiers to march on them.

(FRANZ *enters by the small door.*)

JEANNETTE
Well?

FRANZ
The blankets and harness are still there, but the horse is gone.

LISE
Thieves!

FRANZ
They might have taken more.

JEANNETTE
You want the white lamp put in the window again?

FRANZ
Yes.

LISE (*putting down her knitting*)
Oh, Saint Stephen, haven't we run enough risk already?

FRANZ
We have to take our chance.

LISE
Didn't you hear what the lieutenant was saying?

FRANZ
Who? The little man with the blond mustache?

JEANNETTE
The man who asked so many questions.

FRANZ
Yes, yes, I heard him. What else have I ears for?

LISE
I dreamed last night.

FRANZ (*turning to her*)

You'll drive me crazy with your dreams. You dreamed we were put in the stove and roasted alive. You dreamed we were planted in the ground head first.

LISE

I dreamed we were all shot as spies.

FRANZ

Well, write a report of your dreams and give it to the chief when he comes. I don't care what you do, only shut up.

JEANNETTE

There's somebody in the south field now.

LISE (*clasping her hands*)

Oh, God help us! It's the cavalry come back. I knew it.

FRANZ

Don't be a fool! If it was the Bavarians again, they'd come by the road from the north.

JEANNETTE

He's keeping along close to the wall.

FRANZ

Humpf! I didn't think he'd make it to-night. That devil could slip through the eye of a needle.

(*He picks up the old carbine and examines it.*)

JEANNETTE

Oh, how I wish I'd been born a man!

FRANZ

You think because I taught you to shoot empty wine bottles with my old carbine that you'd like a try at Bavarian officers, eh?

JEANNETTE

I've always wanted to be a man.

FRANZ

Well, it's lucky you're not. You'd have to march in one of the Kaiser's regiments or go to jail.

JEANNETTE

I could have run away. I could have done something for France.

FRANZ (*setting down the carbine*)

If you want to do something for France, you can help get some more supper ready.

LISE (*getting up and going toward the cupboard with her hand to the small of her back*)

That's it; more work! Work and death! Work and death!

JEANNETTE

Mother, I'm ashamed of you.

(*She takes a teapot from a shelf and goes to the kettle hanging by the fire.*)

LISE

And now my own daughter is ashamed of me.

(*She begins taking bread and other food from the cupboard.*)

FRANZ (*to* LISE)

Mind now, no more of your silly talk.

(*He takes the things from* LISE *and puts them on the table.*)

LISE

Mind yourself. I'm old enough to know my place.

(*There is a knock at the larger door.*)

FRANZ

Come in. Come in.

(*The door opens and* DUROT *enters dressed as a working man. He carries a bundle under his arm. The others go on preparing the table.*)

DUROT

Well, good friends, all alive and safe, eh?

FRANZ

Yes, thank God.

DUROT (*putting down his bundle*)

I've been reclining among your cabbages for three hours.

LISE

Then, you saw the Germans?

DUROT (*dusting his clothes*)

And recognized your horse, which made me very unhappy as I had designs upon the animal myself.

JEANNETTE (*putting the teapot on the table*)

There are other horses, m'sieur.

DUROT (*dryly*)

Of course! It may even rain horses. I've known it to rain cats and dogs.

FRANZ

And lead, eh?

DUROT

Sometimes. (*He draws a chair up to the table.*) At present, I'd prefer a deluge of hot soup.

FRANZ

Lise thinks the Bavarians may come back.

DUROT (*cutting a slice of bread*)

Never mind the Bavarians. You should spend a couple of weeks skulking around the way I've been doing to properly appreciate a nice quiet meal like this.

(*He begins eating.*)

JEANNETTE (*pouring the tea*)

You're not afraid of being caught, m'sieur?

DUROT

My dear child, never take anything seriously. Remember that, and you'll always be happy.

FRANZ

Ah, ha! That's the way to talk. To hear my old woman you'd think this war was the end of the world.

DUROT

Go on. Your friendly voices are like music to my ears, which, I may also add, are full of mud.

LISE

I can't see why you do it.

DUROT (*setting down his soup*)

Fill my ears with mud? Purely an accident.

LISE

A rich gentleman like you that might be anything he wanted.

FRANZ

Keep a civil tongue in your head, can't you?

LISE

No, I can't, not when he drags us into his dirty work.

JEANNETTE
Mother!

DUROT
If she wants to lecture me, I'm quite resigned to it.

LISE
He lives across the boundary, doesn't he? There's no call for him to be a spy.

DUROT (*pushing back his chair*)
True. The matter of a mile and a half between your hearthstone and mine makes it possible for me to serve the Republic, for which, by the way, as an aristocrat I haven't the slightest respect, in some more open and showy capacity. At my age, I might even be getting fat as a colonel of reserves.

LISE
You always were a wild one.

DUROT
There speaks the friend of my boyhood. Good old Lise, the same Lise that used to spank me for robbing your orchard. I can still feel the place in frosty weather. (*He takes a cigarette.*)

FRANZ
Come, m'sieur. If you've finished your supper.

DUROT (*lighting his cigarette*)
Ah, yes. You want your orders, don't you? Well, to-night there aren't any orders. I only wanted something hot and a place to change my clothes.

LISE
And for that he asks us to risk our necks.

DUROT

Remember Strasburg. Remember the old men that take their flowers to the statue in the square at Paris. Some day you may be proud to think that you risked your neck to contribute even a bowl of soup.

(*He rises.*)

FRANZ

M'sieur can change in our own room upstairs.

LISE

No, no!

DUROT

Thanks. I prefer the barn as a boudoir. If your fascinating Bavarians return, I can slip off into the woods.

FRANZ

Just as you say.

(LISE *and* JEANNETTE *begin clearing away all signs of the supper.*)

DUROT

Lise knows I'm a dangerous guest. To-night I'm more so than ever because, contrary to my custom, I am loaded down with incriminating evidence, false orders concerning the movements of our own troops.

FRANZ

I don't understand.

DUROT

The trick's as old as Cæsar. I have to see that they get safely into the enemy's hands, only I can't afford to have them found in my own pocket.

JEANNETTE

But how—

DUROT

God will doubtless provide a means, mademoiselle, just as he is going to provide a horse to take me to Metz.

FRANZ

But—

DUROT

We'll put our heads together when I've changed my clothes. If everything's safe in, say, fifteen minutes, put the white lamp in the small window.

(*He takes up his bundle.*)

FRANZ

And, if—

DUROT

The one with the red shade. Au revoir.

(*He goes out the door at left.*)

FRANZ

There's a devil for you.

JEANNETTE

He said he was going to Metz.

FRANZ

You pay attention to what you're doing and watch the road—both directions, mind you. It's none of our business why he's going to Metz.

LISE

He can't go too far to suit me. It's like living over a pit with him flying about.

FRANZ

Stop your grumbling and get to bed. I'll go up with you and change my boots.

JEANNETTE

What about me?

FRANZ

You stay where you are and watch the road till I come back. You've been away from the window long enough already.

JEANNETTE

I could hear horses or a motor half a mile off.

(LISE, *having finished puting away the dishes, mounts the stairs slowly.*)

FRANZ

Not with the wind the way it is, you couldn't.

JEANNETTE

There's no more oil in the red lamp.

FRANZ

Well, fill it as quick as you can, and then do what I told you.

JEANNETTE

All right.

(FRANZ *goes upstairs.* JEANNETTE *takes a can of oil from the cupboard and fills the red lamp. She has her back to the door at the left. Just as she replaces the shade, the door opens and* LIEUTENANT ULRICH *enters, followed by an orderly.*)

ULRICH

Good evening, fräulein. (JEANNETTE *turns with a start.*) I wasn't expected, eh? You haven't even a smile for me?

JEANNETTE

You frightened me.

ULRICH

Caught you napping, did I? So you weren't watching at the window this time?

JEANNETTE

We've just finished clearing up after your men. I was going to bed.

ULRICH

Well, whether I'm welcome or not, you'll have to make the best of me. (*He takes off his coat and throws it over the back of a chair, then turns to his companion.*) Hegel, you can go on as far as the crossroads; it's about half a mile. Wait there for a detachment of Prussian lancers from across the river. Tell the officer in charge that he'll find me here.

THE ORDERLY (*saluting*)

Very good, Lieutenant Ulrich.

ULRICH

You needn't come back yourself. Just leave my motorcycle where it is. I'll catch up to you at the next village.

THE ORDERLY

Yes, sir.

ULRICH

That's all.

(*The* ORDERLY *salutes and goes out.* ULRICH *takes off his sword belt, hangs it on the chair with his cloak, and lays his revolver on the table.*)

JEANNETTE

You're not going to stay all night, then?

ULRICH

No. I have to meet an officer and deliver despatches. This second intrusion is just a little idea of my own. If I have to sit up, I prefer a comfortable chair to a hard rock by the road. Besides, I wanted another look at the inside of this charming house.

JEANNETTE

There's nothing much to see.

(*She turns back to the red lamp.*)

ULRICH

Perhaps not, but your amiable family interest me strangely. Your father, for instance, smokes remarkably good tobacco for a peasant.

JEANNETTE

He smokes just what other folks like him smoke.

(*She takes the shade from the lamp.*)

ULRICH (*sniffing*)

That's odd. I'd say that some one had been smoking a Turkish cigarette here not ten minutes ago.

JEANNETTE

You're crazy.

ULRICH

Am I?

JEANNETTE

Yes.

(*She strikes a match.*)

ULRICH

What are you doing?

JEANNETTE

Lighting a lamp. The room's too dark.

ULRICH
Put that down and come here.

JEANNETTE
What do you want?
(*She blows out the match.*)

ULRICH
Only a kiss. Come now, don't be sullen about it.

JEANNETTE
If you touch me, I'll slap your face.

ULRICH
I wouldn't do that if I were you.

JEANNETTE
Why not?

ULRICH
I could make you a lot of trouble if I wanted to.

JEANNETTE (*backing away from him*)
You let me alone, do you hear?

ULRICH (*taking her by the wrist*)
I'm not going to eat you.

JEANNETTE
Let go my wrist.
(FRANZ *appears at the head of the stairs.*)

FRANZ
Here, here! What's the trouble now?

ULRICH (*releasing* JEANNETTE)
So, ho! Farmer Franz isn't in bed after all.

FRANZ (*coming downstairs*)
I heard you come in. It took me a little while to slip into my clothes.

ULRICH

You see I've made myself at home.
(*He sits down beside the table.*)

FRANZ

Our poor house is always at your service. Jeannette, why don't you light another lamp for Lieutenant Ulrich?
(JEANNETTE *goes to the red lamp and again strikes a match.*)

ULRICH (*watching her curiously*)

As a family you seem to have a strange fondness for illuminations.

FRANZ (*taking a bottle and glass from the shelf*)

Perhaps, the herr lieutenant would like a little glass of brandy.

ULRICH (*his eyes still on* JEANNETTE *as she places the shade on the red lamp*)

No, thanks. I never drink when I'm on duty. I have some papers to go over.

FRANZ

Clear the table, girl. Lieutenant Ulrich wants room for his elbows. Give me the red lamp.
(*He sets down the bottle of brandy and the glass, takes the red lamp from* JEANNETTE *and moves with it toward the small window.* ULRICH *picks up his revolver.*)

ULRICH

Stop where you are. (FRANZ *stops.*) Blow it out.

FRANZ

But—

ULRICH (*rising with his revolver in his hand*)

Do as I tell you. (FRANZ *blows out the lamp.*) Now, girl, take the white one and put it in the window. (LISE *appears at the top of the stairs and comes down slowly.* JEANNETTE *hesitates and glances at her father, who makes a motion with his head toward the large window.*)

FRANZ

You hear the lieutenant, don't you?

(JEANNETTE *takes up the white lamp and takes a few steps in the direction indicated by* FRANZ.)

ULRICH

Not that window. The one over there, and don't drop the chimney if you know what's good for you. (JEANNETTE *goes reluctantly and places the white lamp in the small window at the right.*)

LISE

Oh, Saint Katharine!

FRANZ (*in an undertone*)

Shut your mouth!

(*He steps toward the door.*)

ULRICH

Where are you going?

FRANZ

Outside to get some wood for the fire.

ULRICH

I think not. Sit down where you are, all of you. No foolishness now. Understand?

(*The three peasants sit down in the nearest chairs.*)

FRANZ

I don't know what you mean by this. We're all honest people here.

LISE

My husband served his time in the army. He's got his discharge papers.

ULRICH

Not another sound or I'll deal with you like rats.

JEANNETTE

Do you expect us to stay like this all night?

ULRICH

I don't think we'll have to.

(*He draws his chair back from the table and sits down facing the small door with his revolver covering it. There is a pause, during which* FRANZ *takes out his pipe and fills it. The clock strikes. Just as it has finished, the door opens and* DUROT *appears on the threshold dressed in a priest's black cassock and hat. At the sight of* ULRICH *he pauses with his hand still on the knob of the door but makes no sign of surprise.*)

ULRICH

Be good enough to shut the door after you. (DUROT *shuts the door and stands with his back to it.*) Now, your hands above your head, m'sieur.

(DUROT *complies without hesitation.*)

DUROT (*good humoredly*)

This is a singular reception. May I ask what it means?

ULRICH

I compliment you on your promptness. Your friends have been expecting you.

DUROT

I have no friends here except as all men are my friends. I have never seen these people before.

ULRICH

You're a cool one.

DUROT

A peaceful heart maketh a contented man.

ULRICH

What are you doing here?

DUROT

I am walking to your division headquarters to offer my services in the hospital work. I saw a light in the window, so I came in.

ULRICH

Excellent. You're certainly a slippery rat.

DUROT

I am not accustomed to such language even from officers.

ULRICH

Unbutton that cassock.

DUROT

May I remind you there are women present. Even a priest is mortal beneath his cloth.

ULRICH

Take it off, I tell you.

DUROT (*with a shrug*)

You are enough to tax the patience of an angel. (*He swiftly unbuttons his cassock and slips it off his shoulders. It drops to the floor, revealing him in a Bavarian uniform exactly like* ULRICH'S, *but without the belt and sidearms.*) You are very hard to deceive, lieutenant. I shall take pleasure in recommending you for the intelligence department.

ULRICH (*uncertainly*)

If I've made a mistake, you had me at a disadvantage.

DUROT

You are under no disadvantage other than a lack of wit, beauty, and common sense, without which most men become or remain useless to their superiors.

ULRICH (*flustered*)

If you ask me, sir—

DUROT

I come here in a certain way for a certain purpose and instead of asking me quietly for my identification, you set this fool trap and force my hand.

ULRICH

That may all be, but—you'll have to give me a clearer explanation.

DUROT

I'll take a look at your own papers, if you please. I don't know you, and I don't know these peasants.

LISE

We're all loyal people, excellency.

FRANZ

I've got my written discharge from the last line of reserves.

DUROT

I'm not talking to you.

ULRICH

You can satisfy yourself about me in a moment.
(*He reaches into the breast of his coat and hands a packet of papers to* DUROT.)

DUROT (*glancing through them*)

Um, Lieutenant Emil Ulrich—so and so, and so, and so— Well, Lieutenant Ulrich, you can put down that pistol.
(*He tosses the packet on the table.*)

ULRICH

Not so fast. Your own papers, captain—

DUROT

Still skeptical, eh?
(*He reaches into his own pocket and produces a packet similar to* ULRICH'S, *which he also tosses on to the table.* ULRICH *lays down his revolver and takes up the papers. As he does so,* DUROT *takes one step toward the table.*)

ULRICH

Kindly stand back a little.

DUROT (*stepping back with a shrug*)

A mountain of doubt, a head thicker than the wall of China.

ULRICH (*reading from the papers*)

"Captain Max Felder, Sixth Division, Fourth Regi-

ment, Squadron E. Detailed on Special Service by Major Kampf." Countersigned and so forth and so forth. (*He folds the papers.*) So, you're Captain Max Felder, are you? This is very amusing.

DUROT

If you are quite through with those papers—

ULRICH

You'll have no further use for them, my friend. (*He puts the packet calmly into his own pocket.*) You are not playing in luck to-night, m'sieur. It happens that the real Captain Max Felder is my own brother-in-law. (*He picks up the pistol.*) Your hands above your head again and no more tricks. (DUROT *obeys.*) Well, what have you to say for yourself now, Captain Felder?

DUROT

Nothing that would either amuse or interest you, a man of your intelligence.

ULRICH (*pleased with himself*)

Ah, ha! You'll have to give me credit for a little sense after all.

DUROT

You at least know your own family.

ULRICH

Your hands a little higher, please. Now, you, Franz, go through this gentleman's pocket for me.

(FRANZ *moves toward* DUROT.)

ULRICH

Put what you find on the table and, mind you, don't miss anything.

(FRANZ *begins going through* DUROT'S *pockets.*

JEANNETTE *takes a few steps toward where the old carbine leans against the wall.* ULRICH *glances toward her and she stops.*)

LISE

God is our witness, we never laid eyes on him till he came in at the door.

ULRICH (*to* FRANZ)

No foolishness now, or I'll blow your heads off.

(JEANNETTE *takes two more steps toward the carbine. This time she is unnoticed by* ULRICH. FRANZ *has tossed a few trinkets and a package of blue papers on to the table.*)

FRANZ (*his search completed*)

That's all.

ULRICH (*pointing to the piece of rope by the fireplace*)

Now take that piece of rope and tie his arms.

(FRANZ *moves toward the fireplace.* ULRICH *lays the revolver on the edge of the table and picks up the blue papers.* JEANNETTE *is now beside the carbine.*)

H'm, cipher despatches. This looks like something worth while.

(*He has his back completely turned to* JEANNETTE *for a moment. She snatches up the carbine and covers him with it.*)

JEANNETTE

Don't move, Lieutenant Ulrich, not an inch!

DUROT

Good girl!

(ULRICH *turns his head so that he can see* JEANNETTE. *He remains perfectly cool.*)

ULRICH

So, you're in this, too, eh?

(*He moves slightly toward his own weapon.*)

JEANNETTE

Don't move your hand.

ULRICH

Come, come, now, you can't frighten me. You wouldn't kill me in cold blood. Shooting's a man's business.

(*He suddenly reaches for his own revolver.* JEANNETTE *fires at his hand.* ULRICH *springs back and the pistol falls to the floor at* DUROT'S *feet.* FRANZ *suddenly springs on* ULRICH *before he has had time to recover himself.*)

ULRICH (*struggling with* FRANZ)

Damn you!

(JEANNETTE *goes to her father's side, and* LISE *runs for the rope.*)

DUROT (*picking up the revolver*)

Come, m'sieur, it's no use over-exerting yourself. The odds are too much for you.

ULRICH

You—you rats! You'll all suffer for this.

(*He stands panting while* FRANZ *and* JEANNETTE *tie his arms.*)

DUROT

You ought to thank her for sparing your life. Women are too infernally tender-hearted. She might at least have carried away one of your thumbs.

ULRICH

Damn her! I'd like to wring her neck.

DUROT

So should I. She's put an immense responsibility on me as a result of your continued existence.

ULRICH (*sullenly*)

Why don't you murder me yourself, then?

DUROT

Don't be alarmed. You're dealing with a gentleman.

FRANZ

What now, m'sieur?

DUROT

Turn out his pockets.

(FRANZ *goes rapidly through* ULRICH'S *pockets and puts the contents on the table.* DUROT *draws up a chair to the table and begins going over the items.*) Um—I've seen these already. (*He lays aside one package.*) What's this? A pocketbook full of French money, eh? Here, Franz, this is for you. (*He tosses the pocketbook to* FRANZ.)

ULRICH

You dirty thief.

DUROT

It's only fair pay for the horse your men took. (FRANZ *empties the pocketbook, stuffs the bills into his pocket and throws the pocketbook into the fire.*) And these despatches? (*He reads the superscription.*) "To be delivered to Captain Hans Lutgren." Well, well, I'm afraid Captain Lutgren won't get his despatches to-night. I'll have a look at them myself later. Captain Hans Lutgren, eh?

JEANNETTE

It must be the officer he was waiting for.

DUROT

What do you mean?

JEANNETTE

When he first came in, he had an orderly with him. I heard him say to go on about half a mile to the crossroads and wait for a company of lancers from across the river.

DUROT

Why didn't you tell me this before?

JEANNETTE

I—I don't how. Things have happened so fast.

DUROT (*drumming on the table with his fingers*)

Come, now, get your wits together. What else?

JEANNETTE

The orderly was to tell the officer in charge that he'd find Lieutenant Ulrich here. Then, he was to go on himself to the next village and wait.

DUROT (*to* ULRICH)

So, ho! That's why you're so cool, is it? You thought you were going to sit calmly in that chair till your friends came for you, eh? Well, well, how very nice.

LISE

Oh, my God, we'll be killed!

DUROT

I think not, but it requires a little thought.

FRANZ

We'll do what you tell us to do.

DUROT

Can you see the road from the window? I mean the river road.

JEANNETTE

Yes.

DUROT

Then get over there and don't take your eyes off it. We'll have our hands full preparing Lieutenant Ulrich for the night. I'm afraid I can't take him with me.

LISE

If they don't find him here, they'll search the house.

DUROT

I was thinking of the cellar under the barn, a trifle damp but safe, if you don't mind rats. He can have the cassock and my clothes for a pillow.

ULRICH

You'll have to get me there first.

DUROT (*to* FRANZ)

Gag him and take an extra hitch on his arms.

(FRANZ *does so.*)

LISE

Oh, Mary in Heaven, what's to become of us?

DUROT

You must take whatever you can carry and walk to St. Ignace. Go by the upper road through the woods. It was still open this afternoon. You'll find some French infantry just this side of the town. Ask for Colonel Decartier and tell him you come from me.

LISE

But, this is our home, m'sieur.

DUROT

Of course, you're welcome to stay if you like. I'm

only offering a suggestion. You have money enough to take you to Paris, thanks to the generosity of Lieutenant Ulrich. You can look up my sister, Élise. She'll take care of you.

FRANZ (*who has finished with* ULRICH'S *gag*)
Eh, bien, m'sieur. He's ready.

DUROT
Then up with him. We can't waste any more time. (DUROT *and* FRANZ *are about to lift* ULRICH *from the chair.*)

JEANNETTE (*at the window*)
They're coming.

FRANZ
Eh?

JEANNETTE
I can see their lances in the moonlight, about twenty of them.

DUROT
How long will it take them to get here?

FRANZ
Not more than eight minutes at the outside, if they've passed the turn of the road.

DUROT
Come, then, step lively.

FRANZ
It's no good, m'sieur. We couldn't make it.

LISE
Oh, my God, it's all over with us. It's all over.

JEANNETTE (*turning from the window*)
M'sieur, tell us what to do?

DUROT

Stay where you are and let me know when they get to the foot of the hill.

(JEANNETTE *turns to the window.*)

LISE

It's death! That's what it means, death. I knew it would come to this.

FRANZ

We might knock him on the head and make a try for the woods.

DUROT

No, they'd have us in twenty minutes at the outside. We'd leave a trail like a regiment.

(*He picks up the bottle of brandy and the glass.*)

FRANZ

If we've got to die for this, he dies first.

DUROT

I've got a better idea.

JEANNETTE (*at the window*)

They're walking their horses.

DUROT (*filling the glass to the brim with brandy*)

Good! Take out his gag. (FRANZ *hesitates.*) Do as I tell you.

(FRANZ *complies.* DUROT *sets down the bottle and stands before* ULRICH *with the glass of brandy in his hand.*)

Now, lieutenant, your life as well as our own depends entirely on your doing as I ask. If you raise your voice above a whisper, Franz has my permission to slit your throat.

ULRICH

What do you want?

DUROT

You will drink my health in some of this excellent and very potent brandy.

ULRICH

I'll see you damned first.

DUROT

So? I shall have to force you then. (*He takes* ULRICH'S *throat between the thumb and forefinger and presses it.* ULRICH *writhes in his chair. With the other hand,* DUROT *places the glass of brandy to his lips. After a moment's struggle, he apparently gives up and drinks the brandy.*) All of it, every drop, and Mother Lise will fill you another glass. There, that's right

JEANNETTE

They're still a hundred yards from the foot of the hill. They've got a wagon with them.

DUROT

Come, the second glass.

FRANZ

But, m'sieur, you can't drug a man on brandy in five minutes.

(DUROT *has taken a small medicine bottle from his pocket.*)

DUROT

I'm not depending on the brandy alone, my good Franz. One of these pellets will do the trick in less than two minutes. A man in my business has to be prepared for little emergencies like this.

(*He shakes a tablet from the bottle and drops it into the glass which* LISE *holds out to him.*)

ULRICH (*thickly*)

So, you're going to poison me, are you?

DUROT

It's absolutely harmless.

ULRICH

By God, you can't make me take it.

DUROT

"Can't" is a big word. (*He again takes* ULRICH *by the throat and presses the glass to his lips.*) Come, now, the second dose, brother-in-law.

JEANNETTE

They're almost to the gate.

(FRANZ *draws a long knife from his belt.*)

DUROT

I give you one more chance, Lieutenant Ulrich. We're desperate people.

(*He closes his grip on* ULRICH'S *throat, tilting back his head.* ULRICH *struggles slightly, then gives up and drinks.*)

JEANNETTE

They're dismounting.

DUROT (*as* ULRICH *drains the glass*)

Ah! Now the cloth around his face till I tell you to take it off.

(*He throws the glass on the floor, goes hurriedly to the table and gathers up the packages of papers, as* FRANZ *twists the towel around* ULRICH'S *face and stands back of him holding the ends.*)

JEANNETTE

The two officers are talking together. They're looking at the motorcycle.

(DUROT *has been running rapidly through the papers. He looks up sharply.*)

DUROT

What motorcycle?

JEANNETTE

Lieutenant Ulrich's.

DUROT

You'll never make a spy, my girl. You forget too many important details.

(ULRICH'S *head drops forward.*)

FRANZ

He's gone under, m'sieur

DUROT

Good! Throw the towel in the corner and stuff these in his pockets.

(*He hands* FRANZ *the packet of false despatches and* FRANZ *stuffs them into the breast of* ULRICH'S *coat.* DUROT *continues sorting the papers in his hand.*)

JEANNETTE

An officer and two soldiers are coming up the hill.

DUROT (*reading the superscription on one of the packages*)

"To be delivered to Captain Hans Lutgren." I'll take a chance on keeping these myself.

(*He tucks the packet into his own breast.*)

LISE (*wringing her hands*)

Oh, God, have mercy on us! We'll all be killed, butchered!

DUROT (*tearing one of the remaining packages in two and handing the pieces to* LISE)
Here, burn these and then stay by the fire with your back to the room till you get your wits together.
(*He lays the last packet on the table and picks up* ULRICH'S *sword belt from the back of the chair.*)

FRANZ
I don't understand.

DUROT (*calmly adjusting the belt on his own person*)
I'm merely destroying Captain Max Felder. He appears to have too many relatives. We'll hope Lieutenant Ulrich isn't as well known.

JEANNETTE (*in a whisper*)
For heaven's sake, m'sieur, they're only fifty paces from the house.

DUROT (*stuffing the packet of papers into his belt*)
Quick, then. Push him on the floor and throw the cassock over him.
(*As* FRANZ *obeys,* DUROT *snatches up* ULRICH'S *cloak and throws it around his own shoulders.*)

JEANNETTE (*turning from the window*)
What am *I* to do?

DUROT
Open the door the moment they knock, and trust to the Goddess of Chance.
(*He picks up* ULRICH'S *helmet and puts it on.*)

FRANZ (*who has finished with* ULRICH *and risen*)
Ah, ha, m'sieur, a perfect fit.
(*He shakes his head, chuckling.*)

DUROT (*adjusting the helmet*)
A good omen, eh?
(*There is a knock at the door and* JEANNETTE *goes toward it.* DUROT *seats himself on the edge of the table.* FRANZ *turns his back, takes out his pipe, and begins to fill it. The door opens and* CAPTAIN LUTGREN *enters with two soldiers, who remain on the threshold.*)

LUTGREN (*pleasantly*)
Well, sir, I hope I haven't kept you waiting.

DUROT
Am I addressing Captain Hans Lutgren?

LUTGREN
That's my name, yes. Yours is—

DUROT
Lieutenant Emil Ulrich.

LUTGREN
Of what regiment?

DUROT (*taking the papers from his belt*)
These will identify me.

LUTGREN (*taking the papers and glancing at them casually*)
Only a formality, of course. Your orderly met us at the crossroad.

FRANZ
Lise—

LISE
Yes.

FRANZ
Get the officer a cup of hot tea.

LUTGREN (*without looking up from the papers*)
Don't trouble yourselves.

LISE
Or just a little drop of brandy?

LUTGREN
No, thanks. I have to be on my way and so does the lieutenant here. (*He hands the papers back to* DUROT.) You've some despatches for me, eh?

DUROT
No, sir, only verbal orders.

LUTGREN (*a little surprised*)
So?

DUROT
There are too many French reconnoitering parties about to risk any unnecessary written orders falling into their hands.

LUTGREN
That's a wise precaution, of course.

DUROT
How many men have you?

LUTGREN
Twelve troopers and a wagon crew. Why?

DUROT
Um—that's not enough. If you'd been in considerable force, I was to tell you to take the main road on to the next town and report to Colonel Reiter.

LUTGREN
Well, sir?

DUROT
As it is, you'll have to go around by the wood road

to St. Ignace. You'll find a large detachment of Prussian Infantry just this side of the town. You can report to Major Klein for instructions.
(FRANZ *looks up warily when he hears* DUROT'S *instructions about St. Ignace.*)

LUTGREN
Umm—I never heard of Klein. What regiment?
(*He takes out a notebook and pencil.*)

DUROT
One Hundred and Thirteenth of the First Line.

LUTGREN
Thanks. I can find the road on my maps.

DUROT
You take the first turn to the right and then go straight ahead.

LUTGREN (*putting back the notebook and pencil*)
Anything else?

DUROT
Yes, sir, something rather important.

LUTGREN
Important, eh?

DUROT
A prisoner I'd like to turn over to you.

LUTGREN
Where is he?

DUROT
Over there on the floor.
(LUTGREN *strides over to* ULRICH *and pulls the cassock from over him.*)

LISE

Oh, Saint Stephen!

LUTGREN

What's this? A Bavarian officer? Why, the man's drunk. He's fairly reeking of brandy.

DUROT

So I've found out.

LUTGREN

What's this over him?

LISE (*whining*)

We're all honest folks, excellency.

DUROT

Keep quiet!

FRANZ

It's a cassock. He came in dressed as a priest about an hour ago. He made us give him supper and brandy. There's the bottle on the table. It was full when he started.

DUROT

When I found him he was under the table in the next room.

LUTGREN

There's something damned queer about this. He's got the number of your own regiment on his collar.

DUROT

I never saw him before in my life.

LUTGREN

By gad, you made a good job of trussing him up. I suppose you've been through his pockets?

FRANZ

No, excellency.

DUROT

We'd only finished bringing him in here when the girl saw your detachment coming. I thought it better to wait for you.

LUTGREN (*rising and dusting his trousers*)

Um! Sergeant, search the prisoner.

(*The two soldiers come forward and rapidly go through* ULRICH'S *pockets.*)

LISE

God be our witness, we never laid eyes on him till he came in at the door.

LUTGREN

Never mind that. You can talk later. Well, sergeant?

THE SERGEANT

A package of cigarettes, a handkerchief, and these. (*He hands* LUTGREN *the blue papers.*)

LUTGREN

Ah! (*Adjusts his eyeglass.*) I thought so. French despatches in cipher. I'll send a man back with them to division headquarters.

DUROT

Exactly.

LUTGREN

That settles it. We'll put this drunken pig against the wall and save ourselves the trouble of carting him along.

DUROT (*fastening the cloak together under his chin*)

May I suggest something before I go?

LUTGREN

Eh?

DUROT

You have a wagon with you. Why not put these peasants and the prisoner in together and take them with you to St. Ignace?

LUTGREN

I believe you're right, lieutenant. Attention, all of you!

LISE

God be my witness—

FRANZ

Shut up! The officers know what's best for us. We'll find friends in St. Ignace to speak a good word for us.

DUROT

I don't doubt it in the least. Well, captain—
(*He holds out his hand.*)

LUTGREN (*taking his hand*)

Good night, lieutenant.

CURTAIN

AN IDYLL OF THE SHOPS

A PLAY

CHARACTERS

MAX BLOOM....*proprietor of a small garment factory*
LOUIS MENDELSOHN.....*one of his operatives*
SOL GARFINKLE.....*a former operative*
YETTA LABOWSKY.....*a coat finisher*
SADIE.....*a skirt finisher*
APPLE MARY.....*a peddler*

AN IDYLL OF THE SHOPS

It is a morning of a spring day. The PLACE *is* MAX BLOOM'S *loft on the west side of Chicago. Back are several dirty windows through which the sun comes faintly. One of them, open, overlooks an alley. At the right a door leads to the stairs. The left wall is hung with garments and the floor littered with papers and scraps. There is a table in the center of the stage, one end of which is piled high with unfinished garments. Near the table is a dummy figure used for fitting. There are four sewing machines on the left.* YETTA, SADIE, *and* LOUIS *are at work at three of them when the curtain rises.* SOL *is sitting on the edge of the table swinging his feet; though seedy and pale there is still a jaunty air about him.*

YETTA

Wasn't Mr. Bloom in the office?

SOL

The bookkeeper said he was up here.

SADIE

Maybe he's in the cutting room.

SOL

He'll be around soon anyhow. I'll wait.

LOUIS

How's things been by you, Sol?

SOL

Oh, swell, thanks. I mean, pretty good.

LOUIS

Working all the time since you left here?

SOL

Oh, yes, I been working all right, most of the time, except lately.

YETTA

A first-class workman like you, Mr. Garfinkle, shouldn't have no trouble getting something.

SOL

Sure. I know that. Say, Louis, I meant to bring that two dollars I borrowed off you.

LOUIS

I can wait till next week, anyhow.

SOL

I'll be fixed all right by that time, sure.

YETTA

How's Mrs. Garfinkle?

SOL

Oh, elegant! Well, all except just now, the last couple of weeks. It ain't anything serious.

SADIE

I was going round to see her sometime.

SOL (*embarrassed*)

We moved from where we was. We're staying with Mrs. Garfinkle's folks. Say, who's working on the other machine now?

LOUIS

Nobody. We had a new feller, but Bloom let him go Saturday.

SOL

Hmm, they tell me business is going to pick up again.

LOUIS

How do I know?

SOL

I just thought I'd give the boss a chance to take me back before I tried anywheres else, that's all.

YETTA

It won't do no harm to ask.

LOUIS (*after listening a moment*)

I guess that's him on the landing now.

(*The three operators bend over their machines. The door opens and* BLOOM *enters. He has several basted garments on his arm. He seems worried and preoccupied.* SOL *slides down from his perch on the table, buttons his coat, and straightens his shoulders nervously.*)

BLOOM (*without removing the unlighted cigar from his mouth*)

How you getting on with them thirty-eights, Mendelsohn?

LOUIS (*without looking up*)

I only got one more skirt yet.

BLOOM

You can leave that go till afternoon. I got something else I want run through right away.

(*He lays the basted garments on the table.*)

SOL

Fine morning, Mr. Bloom.

BLOOM (*turning to* SOL *for the first time as if he hadn't noticed him before*)

Huh? So, well, what d'you want?

SOL

You remember me—Sol Garfinkle?

BLOOM

Yes, I remember you all right, Sol.

SOL

I just thought I'd drop in and see how things was. (*He keeps turning his hat in his hands.*)

BLOOM

I don't allow nobody loafing around, wasting my operators' time. What do you think this is, a coffee parlor?

(*He takes an armful of skirts from the table beside* LOUIS'S *machine.*)

SOL

The girl in the office said I'd find you up here. I want to speak to you, Mr. Bloom.

BLOOM

I got no time to speak to anybody. (*He turns to* LOUIS *with one of the basted garments in his hand.*) Look, now, Mendelsohn, I want you should pay close attention. I got here the new model, thirty-four domestic suitings, that Spielman's buyer is looking at. Y'understand?

LOUIS

Yes, sir.

BLOOM

While you're making 'em, I'll put Miss Labowsky on the coat trimmings.

(*He turns from* LOUIS *to* YETTA *while* LOUIS *examines the skirt.*)

SOL (*who has waited patiently*)

Mr. Bloom, I thought maybe you might want to take on another man.

BLOOM

When I want another man, I'll put a sign out to say what I want. (*He bends over* YETTA *at her machine with the coat in his hand.*) Look a-here, Miss Labowsky, this braid wants to be moved.

SOL

If business is going to pick up like they say it is—

BLOOM (*turning on him*)

Grr! Haven't I said I'm busy!

SOL (*patiently*)

All right. I'll wait.

BLOOM

You can get out from here.

SOL

If I could maybe see you a minute in the office when you get through—

BLOOM

No, you couldn't.

SOL

Look a-here, Mr. Bloom, I'm kind o' up against it. I haven't had a square meal.

BLOOM

Gott! Do I have to listen to that again? If I take on every feller that hasn't the price of a meal, I must have a factory the size of Henry Ford's. D'you think I'm a charity office—or what?

SOL

Please, Mr. Bloom, I ain't giving you a stall. Things is awful bad with us. Look at my shoes. They're wore through from going round to the shops. I got to have a job or I'm done for. You know I'm a first-class operator and you got a machine that ain't running. They say trade is picking up, too.

BLOOM

Oi, oi, that's enough of how trade's picking up.

SOL (*almost whining*)

I'll work like you don't know what, Mr. Bloom. Just try me for a week. You can make your own terms. Say, Mr. Bloom, what you got against me?

BLOOM

I got nothing against you, Garfinkle, positively I ain't—

SOL

But you won't take me on again?

BLOOM

No, I won't; so that's an end to it.

SOL (*buttoning his coat nervously*)

All right, then; I'll go, damn your soul!

BLOOM

Huh? What's that you say?

SOL (*savagely*)
"Damn your soul!" that's what I said. You could give me work if you wanted to, only a stinker like you don't care what happens. You'd just as leave see me go to jail if it saved you a nickel carfare.

BLOOM
Get out of here!

SOL
You don't care if my wife's got to beg off the United Charities so long's yours can maybe some day have an electric and live on Sheridan Road.

BLOOM
I said get out!

SOL
All right. I'm going.
(*Exit* GARFINKLE.)

BLOOM (*looking after him*)
Gott! Electric! Sheridan Road! Maybe I'm in the poorhouse myself any day.

SADIE
I guess Mrs. Garfinkle's been awful sick.

BLOOM (*turning on her*)
And what if she is? Uh? That ain't your business, nor yet mine, is it?
(SADIE *bends her head over her work.* BLOOM *glares at her.*)

YETTA (*as if to change the subject*)
Will I move both the loops of braid, Mr. Bloom?
(BLOOM *goes toward* YETTA'S *machine.*)

BLOOM (*muttering*)
Crazy! Everybody's crazy around here.
(*He leans over* YETTA.)

YETTA
It's these I mean.

BLOOM
Sure, there's the chalk mark. What you got eyes for?

SADIE
I'm done with them blouses.

BLOOM (*coming back from* YETTA'S *machine*)
All right. You can take the skirt Mendelsohn's doing as soon as he finishes the seam he's on. Then you can get back on them thirty-fours again, Mendelsohn. D'you understand?

LOUIS (*without looking up*)
All right.

BLOOM
Gott, what a morning! (*Looking at his watch.*) I'll come back again for that suit before twelve.
(*The other three bend over their machines without answering.* BLOOM *gathers up the blouses* SADIE *has finished and goes out. When the door closes* YETTA *pushes back her chair and puts her hands to her face for a moment.*)

SADIE (*looking over her shoulder at* YETTA)
What's the matter, Yetta?

YETTA
Nothing. I was just thinking—it's a shame.

SADIE
I liked Sol Garfinkle.

LOUIS

Sure I liked him all right myself. He could always make me laugh.

YETTA (*dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief*)

Oh, well, feeling bad about it don't help any.

(*She resumes her sewing. In the alley seven floors below a hurdy-gurdy starts playing. The lively jangling music mingles with the hum of the machines. As they continue to work* LOUIS *starts humming the air being played outside.* YETTA *looks up at* LOUIS *and smiles.*)

LOUIS (*stopping his machine and turning the skirt*)

It's from "Traviata."

YETTA (*stopping her machine*)

H'm, it makes you want to dance, don't it?

LOUIS (*shaking his head from side to side in the manner of a tenor*)

Ta-da, da, ta, ta, da. Ta, ta, da.

(*He sings a snatch of the aria without words and then resumes humming it.*)

YETTA

My, you got a good voice, Louis.

LOUIS

Ah-ha, you like it?

YETTA

Oh, fine!

LOUIS

Don't fool yourself. I know when I'm being kidded. But sometime I'll show you some real singing. I'll take you to the opera, and we'll sit in the nigger heaven.

YETTA

G'wan! D'you hear, Sadie; I'm going to the opera?
(SADIE *coughs and goes on sewing.*)

LOUIS (*turning good-naturedly to* SADIE)

Stop sewing a minute, for heaven's sake.
(SADIE *stops mechanically.* YETTA *jumps up, goes to the open window, and leans out.*)

YETTA

Ain't the sun nice. Do you like the sun, Sadie?

SADIE

I like it all right.
(*She coughs.*)

YETTA (*at the window*)

I can just see him; it's the same one.

LOUIS (*getting up and going toward the window*)

Who? Pete?

YETTA

Uh-huh. He ain't got his monkey, aber.

LOUIS (*handing* YETTA *a coin and a piece of paper*)

Here! Throw him something.

YETTA (*wrapping the coin in the paper*)

Hey, mister! Hey! Look!
(*She tosses the coin.* LOUIS *leans beside her on the sill. The music stops.*)

LOUIS

He got it.

YETTA (*turning away from the window and going slowly back to her machine*)

I'd like to give money away—lots of money.
(SADIE *coughs.*)

LOUIS (*following* YETTA *to her machine*)

We'll go together to the opera. November the seventeenth it commences. It won't seem so long, only a few months.

SADIE

In the slack season a few months is a long time.

LOUIS

I should know it.

YETTA

Why you?

LOUIS

Because I wasn't born last week. Ach, that this little machine should mean so much. (*He gives the wheel of* YETTA'S *machine a vicious twist, thrusts his hands into his pockets, and takes a couple of steps toward his own machine.*) I tell you, girls, it's better we shouldn't work so quick. We get only more piled onto us. Ask Sadie, she's an old hand. Am I right, Sadie, oder not?

SADIE

It ain't so bad here as the way they speed you up in the bigger shops.

YETTA (*taking the coat from under the needle*)

It makes me a headache anyway to sew when the sun is nice.

SADIE

The boss will be back.

LOUIS

How's he going to know? If Yetta's got the coat-trimmings done, she don't have to start basting them thirty-eights till we hear him coming back.

(*He goes back to his own machine, takes the skirt from under the needle, and hands it over to* SADIE, *who takes it and examines it.* YETTA *threads her needle slowly.* LOUIS *takes an armful of clothes from the table. The hurdy-gurdy stops playing.*)

YETTA

Aw! He's stopped playing.

LOUIS (*seating himself at his machine*)

Never mind, he'll start again. He goes by Gottlieb's shop next. (*He adjusts the needle.* SADIE *starts her own machine and sews stolidly. There is quite a long pause. Suddenly the hurdy-gurdy begins again, the music seeming to come from a greater distance.* LOUIS *pushes back his chair.*) Do you know, Yetta, since I been working by you at the machine I been happy.

YETTA

Why?

LOUIS

Because—I don't know. We got better light here than the last place I worked, for one thing.

YETTA

Oh!

LOUIS

You can imagine. I was in a room bigger than this that had twenty fellers in it.

YETTA

Maybe you like sewing to music, too, eh?

LOUIS (*humming*)

Tum-te-tum, tum-tum—I guess we should worry, what?

(*He gives the wheel of his machine a brisk turn.*)

YETTA

We should. What if it gets slack some more? Do you think the boss will keep us?

LOUIS

How many has he got to keep? Only us three. He'll let the girl in the office go first, oder the errand-boy maybe.

YETTA

He's altogether too fresh, the errand-boy.

LOUIS (*bristling*)

What did he done?

YETTA

Oh, nothing exactly definite.

LOUIS

He's a smart aleck.

YETTA

Well, you don't have to get mad.

(*All sew in silence for a few minutes.*)

LOUIS

Yetta, does it make you feel funny, the music?

YETTA (*lowering her head*)

Does it you?

LOUIS

Yes, kind of. (*They sew for a moment.* SADIE *coughs.* LOUIS *pushes his chair back from his machine with determination.*) Say, a good operator like me can make his seventeen dollars a week any time if given a chance, Yetta.

YETTA

My! I can only make eight or nine sometimes.

LOUIS

That's because you're a girl. One week before it got slack, I made nineteen dollars—in a kike shop like this, too.

YETTA

You don't say!

(*The tune from the hurdy-gurdy changes.*)

LOUIS

Hm. Listen! That's from my favorite opera. It's from "Rigoletto."

YETTA (*with admiration*)

You know all the operas.

LOUIS

No, not all. Only the Saturday night ones.

YETTA

My father wouldn't let me go by night.

LOUIS

But maybe when he becomes acquainted with me?

YETTA

No, no, he wouldn't. I know him.

LOUIS

But it's a mitzveh to go to the opera even by night.

YETTA

Well, we'll see; maybe things will be different.

LOUIS

How different?

(SADIE *coughs.*)

YETTA (*as if to get away from dangerous ground*)

You got a bad cough, Sadie. You should see a doctor.

(SADIE, *who has been coughing painfully into her handkerchief, nods without replying.*)

LOUIS (*watching* SADIE)
It's the machine. It comes from the machine.

YETTA (*putting her hand on* SADIE'S *arm*)
Why don't you go away for a while?

SADIE
For what?

LOUIS
To get rid of your cold.

SADIE
It ain't a cold.
(*The three resume sewing as if by general consent.*)

YETTA
How long you been working, Sadie?

SADIE
I don't know. I forget. Ever since I was like you.
(*A pause.*)

LOUIS (*raising his voice as if to change the subject*)
Nu, well, we all get cold. Yetta, maybe I can see your father soon.

YETTA
Why?

LOUIS
Oh, because I want to meet him. Will he be home to-night?

YETTA
Yes, but to-morrow night is better. He goes to shule to-morrow—
(*She stops in confusion.*)

LOUIS (*eagerly*)
He goes to the service, yes?

YETTA (*hanging her head*)
I don't know. I guess so.

LOUIS
All right, to-morrow night then, yes?

YETTA
I don't care—if you want to.

LOUIS
Thank you.

YETTA
Only you got to be careful what you say to him. He's funny that way. He's awful old-fashioned.

LOUIS
I know. My father Selig was the same exactly.

YETTA (*looking up*)
Is your father dead?

LOUIS
Yes.

YETTA (*shaking her head*)
He won't like that.

LOUIS
Who?

YETTA (*earnestly*)
My father. He won't like it your father is dead. He would like to see your father so he could tell him about you. He's funny that way. He says without the tree you can't tell what the branch will be.

LOUIS

Don't worry. He'll like me.

(*An old woman carrying a large basket appears in the doorway.*)

YETTA

Look. There's Apple Mary.

(LOUIS *turns to the door.*)

YETTA (*in an awed voice*)

I heard she's worth a million dollars—in the last shop they told me.

MARY

Anything today?

LOUIS

You want something, Yetta, a nice apple or a peach?

YETTA

An apple, maybe. I don't know. I ain't hungry.

(LOUIS *fishes out an apple from* MARY'S *basket.*)

LOUIS

Look how red it is.

YETTA

Ain't it!

LOUIS

Here.

(*Their hands meet and remain touching for an instant as he passes her the apple.*)

YETTA

Thank you.

LOUIS (*turning again to the basket*)

What else you got? Let's see. Some nice choc'late? Ah, here—maybe you want some choc'late also?

YETTA
No, thank you.

LOUIS
Well, I'll have some. How much is it all?

MARY
Ten cents.

YETTA
Five cents for one apple?

LOUIS
Never mind. If you like it then it don't matter how much.

MARY (*to* SADIE)
You want something, miss?

SADIE (*without looking up*)
No.

LOUIS
Come on. Maybe you want an apple. (*He fishes another from the basket.*) Look here. (*He hands the apple to* SADIE, *who takes it without speaking. He then turns to* MARY.) That makes fifteen cents. (*He pays* MARY, *who shuffles out with her basket. The three begin to eat.*) Do you like it?

YETTA (*her mouth full*)
Ah-huh.
(*There is a pause, during which they eat and listen to the music.* SADIE, *after two bites, puts down her apple, and resumes her sewing.*)

LOUIS (*suddenly*)
Yetta, can I talk to you reasonable?

YETTA

I don't know. Can you?

LOUIS (*putting his hand on the back of* YETTA'S *chair*)

I mean, will you listen, yes?

YETTA

What is it, a speech, oder something from the opera? (*She continues her sewing.*)

LOUIS

If I could make speeches, I wouldn't be here. I'd be tending a side show.

YETTA (*laughing suddenly and nervously*)

My, but you're funny.

LOUIS

I like you when you laugh.

YETTA

Thank you, Mr. Mendelsohn.

LOUIS

You're entirely welcome, Miss Labowsky.

YETTA (*laughing again*)

You get funnier every minute. You should be a comicker.

(SADIE *coughs.*)

LOUIS

If you knew me more, you'd understand what a serious feller I am.

YETTA

Is that so?

LOUIS (*bending closer to her*)

Yetta, dear.

YETTA (*lowering her head*)
You—you shouldn't talk like that in front of Sadie. It—it ain't nice.

LOUIS
Sadie don't care. Do you, Sadie?

SADIE (*without looking up*)
No, I don't care.

LOUIS
Listen, Yetta, dear.

YETTA
Well, what is it?

LOUIS
I love you. I love you with my whole heart. Since I am working by the machines here I have loved you every minute. (YETTA *drops her work.*) Your name was all the time singing in the wheels: "Yetta, Yetta, Yetta." Just like that.
(YETTA *covers her face with her hands.*)

YETTA
Oh!

LOUIS (*trying to take her hands*)
Tell me, Yetta liebenka, tell me.

YETTA (*withdrawing her hands and turning away her face*)
What should I tell you?
(*In her confusion she spies the neglected apple and takes a bite.*)

LOUIS (*pressing his advantage*)
If you love me?

YETTA

I—I guess you know.

LOUIS

Yes, I know. I know and I'm happy. Listen at the music again. It's singing for us, too, just like the machines and my heart and everything. Yetta—(*He seats himself on the edge of* YETTA'S *machine and takes her head between his hands, turning her face up to him.*) Open your eyes and smile at me. Aw, Yettala, you look so grand. Don't you feel it inside you, the funniness?

YETTA

Yes. I—I love you. (LOUIS *bends over to kiss her.*) No, no, you mustn't; not here.

LOUIS

But I say, yes.

YETTA

Not here in the shop. Please, Louis. Sometime else. (LOUIS *kisses her in spite of a half-hearted resistance. For a moment he holds her in his arms.* SADIE *coughs.* YETTA *releases herself.*)

LOUIS (*triumphantly*)

Well, how about it?

YETTA

You—you oughtn't to have done it.

LOUIS

Everythings is only just begun for us—everythings.

YETTA

You better go sit down. The boss may come in. (*She tries to thread a needle.*) See how you've made my hand shake. I can't fix it.

LOUIS

Never mind. Will you always remember how I kissed you now the first time?

YETTA

Yes

LOUIS

Ten minutes ago if I only dreamed I could kiss you—

YETTA

It's funny things always happen so quick.

LOUIS

In life, that's the way it is. A second, and everything can change.

YETTA

It seems awful queer.

LOUIS

You bet I'm coming right away to see your father. He'll be mine, too. We'll share him fifty-fifty.

YETTA

Oh!

LOUIS

We'll get married, Yetta.

YETTA (*as if a little startled by the word*)

Married?

LOUIS

Yes. You're going to marry me, ain't you?

YETTA

I—yes, we're going to be— Oh, Louis, if we could only keep it like it is now. I—I don't want it any better than this.

LOUIS (*puzzled*)
Don't you want to get married?

YETTA
Yes, yes. I want to get married, only—

LOUIS
Only what?

YETTA
I was thinking about Sol Garfinkle's wife.

LOUIS
What about her?

YETTA
She ain't more'n five years older than me. We used to work in the same shop before she was married. I remember she was awful pretty and—and I seen her again last week and—and she's like an old woman.

LOUIS
You bet I'll see my wife don't work herself sick. I ain't Sol Garfinkle.

YETTA (*very seriously*)
I guess it ain't his fault, but he used to be so funny and laughing all the time just like you are, and he wore good clothes. And then when he was talking to Mr. Bloom about being hard up and cussing him out for not taking him back, I—I couldn't look at him. He was sort of awful, like an animal 'most. He'd been drinking, too.

LOUIS
You mean you couldn't love me if I got that way?

YETTA (*earnestly*)
Oh, yes, I could, only—

LOUIS (*full of confidence in himself*)
You don't have to worry, Yetta. It's a different thing with us altogether. A steady feller like me don't get thrown out of a place so easy. I can earn seventeen dollars a week any time except there's a strike. You can ask the boss himself. We'll have a flat—a little flat with furniture. How about it? Huh?
(*He takes* YETTA'S *hands again.* YETTA'*s face brightens.*)

YETTA
Yes, that'll be fine.

LOUIS
And maybe some day a piano.

YETTA (SOL GARFINKLE *and his troubles quite forgotten*)
I know just the place, around the corner on Twelfth Street—four rooms for twelve dollars. It's on the door.

LOUIS
Swell! And we'll buy everything new.

YETTA
Have you got money saved?

LOUIS (*gayly*)
Money, money, never mind. We'll save and buy. I got a job and with a job I can save millions.

YETTA
And I got a job too.

LOUIS

No. You been engaged already for another position —my wife. That'll be job enough—my little wife. Sadie, do you hear? Yetta and me is going to be married.

SADIE (*without looking up*)

I wish you happiness.

YETTA

Thank you.

LOUIS

The same to you.

SADIE

Me? Huh!

(*She gives a short dry laugh which ends in another fit of coughing.*)

YETTA

It's stuffy in here. Sadie is all the time coughing.

SADIE

It ain't the stuffiness.

YETTA

When we get settled you'll have to come and see us.

LOUIS

You bet.

SADIE

Maybe.

(*She goes on sewing.*)

YETTA

Ssh! Somebody's coming upstairs.

LOUIS (*going back to his machine*)

It's the boss.

YETTA

Don't tell him. I don't want you should tell him yet.

LOUIS

All right. But he can't help notice it. Anybody by looking at you could tell. Your eyes are so shining. (*They laugh as* MAX BLOOM *enters the shop. He is even more noticeably irritable than before.*)

BLOOM

Nu, the model. Is it finished yet?

YETTA

The coat's on top of the pile.

SADIE

Here's the skirt.
(*She takes it from under the needle.*)

LOUIS

I have been working in the thirty-fours, like you said.

BLOOM (*turning to* LOUIS)

Like who said? I told you to finish the thirty-twos, ain't it?

LOUIS

No, sir. I was going to get the thirty-fours out of the way.

BLOOM

Who is boss here?—me oder you? Answer me.

LOUIS (*mildly*)

There ain't any question, Mr. Bloom.

BLOOM

Don't talk back to me, kike.

LOUIS

I wasn't.

BLOOM

I can't leave the shop for a minute without business is ruined behind my back.

(*He goes to* SADIE'S *machine. She hands him the skirt.*)

SADIE

It's finished.

BLOOM (*snatching it from her*)

Here, gimme!

(*As he fits the suit to the dummy model,* LOUIS *and* YETTA *exchange smiles.* BLOOM *catches sight of them.*) What is this, a theayter? We got no time for monkeyshines. (*The three bend over their machines.* BLOOM *steps back from the dummy angrily.*) Gott! Look at it. Look! The skirt hangs, yes? Ach, a cow can sew better than the whole push of you. Lookmit! (*The three operators turn in their chairs and look at the dummy.*)

Who did this? Who was it sewed this here left-hand seam? You, Mendelsohn?

LOUIS

I don't know, maybe.

BLOOM

You don't know? Well, come look at it.

(LOUIS *rises slowly and goes to the dummy.*)

BLOOM

You see what you done, you butcher? You spoiled me a sale. See! It gathers here and here. Ach! It's ruined.

(*He clasps his head with his hands.*)

SADIE

I sewed that seam, Mr. Bloom.

BLOOM

You? You couldn't sew that bad if you tried.

SADIE

I sewed it.

BLOOM

And if you did? I suppose you're proud of it. (*He pulls the garments violently off the dummy.*) Botherka! You cost me a sale to Spielman; that's what you've done.

SADIE

Maybe I can turn it and sew it over again right away.

BLOOM

Ach! Take it!

(*He tosses the skirt to* SADIE.)

LOUIS (*to* SADIE)

Give it here, Sadie, I'll fix it.

BLOOM

Keep your hands off it, you goylum. I guess I know who is a liar around here.

LOUIS

I ain't a liar, Mr. Bloom.

BLOOM

Huh?

LOUIS

I never said it wasn't me sewed it, in the first place.

BLOOM

Nu, I thought so. Then it was you, eh?

LOUIS

I can fix it in five minutes.

BLOOM

Yes; and minutes is money, d'you understand, eh?

LOUIS

It's all right if you dock me.

(SADIE *coughs violently.*)

BLOOM (*to* SADIE)

Gott! Stop it! Since you been working for me you do nothing but cough.

LOUIS

You don't have to talk to her like that.

BLOOM

What is this? Now my workman should tell me how to talk, eh?

LOUIS

I mean she can't help it.

BLOOM

You go to hell!

LOUIS (*controlling his temper*)

Shall I fix the seam oder not, Mr. Bloom?

BLOOM

Never mind. (LOUIS *turns back to his own machine and begins to put a garment under the needle.*) Never mind, I said. Didn't you hear me? When I say "never mind" I mean never mind.

LOUIS

I'm basting on the thirty-fours.

BLOOM

You don't have to baste no more.

LOUIS
Then what?

BLOOM
You can go home.

LOUIS
It's—early. I can finish—

BLOOM (*interrupting savagely*)
You can finish some place else. Get out of here.

LOUIS (*slowly*)
You mean I'm discharged?

BLOOM
Get the hell out of here.

LOUIS
I ain't done nothing that I ain't ready to make right.

BLOOM
Take your hat and coat and don't come back.

LOUIS
Mr. Bloom, I—I—ain't I given satisfaction?

BLOOM
I don't care what you given. Get out! You're fired.

LOUIS
I—I—

YETTA (*impulsively*)
Don't send him away, Mr. Bloom.

BLOOM
Ah—ha! I thought so! You been playing monkey-shines and spoiling my garments like I was nobody.

LOUIS
It ain't right.

BLOOM

That's enough! What I do in my shop is right! If you want to make dates you can pick your girls up on the street, d'you understand? Not in here.

LOUIS

Shut up, you low bum!

BLOOM

What!

LOUIS

Shut up or I'll knock your block off, you dirty—

YETTA

Louis, Louis!

BLOOM (*mimicking her*)

"Louis, Louis!" I'll Louis him.

(*He rushes at* LOUIS, *who seizes his arms.*)

LOUIS

No, you don't, you goddem kike!

(*He hurls* BLOOM *away from him.*)

BLOOM (*trembling with rage*)

I'll call the police and have you arrested, you tramp.

(LOUIS *makes a move as if to strike him.*)

YETTA

Louis! Louis!

LOUIS (*controlling himself*)

I guess Sol Garfinkle was right. He ain't worth to be spit on.

(*He turns abruptly and walks to a hook on the wall where his coat and hat are hung. He puts his hat on his head, flings his coat across his arm and walks out without even a glance at* YETTA.)

BLOOM (*going to the door and shaking his fist after* LOUIS)

I'll—I'll have you blacklisted, you loafer. You won't be able to get a job nowheres in Chicago. I'll—

(*He follows* LOUIS *out on the landing.* YETTA *sits as if stunned for a moment, looking almost stupidly at the door.* SADIE *gets up, goes to the center table and picks up an armful of garments. The hurdy-gurdy in the distance winds up its tune with a flourish and stops.*)

YETTA

He—he said himself, in a second everything can change.

(*She turns to her machine and buries her face in her arms.* SADIE *goes to her and shakes her gently by the shoulders.*)

SADIE

You better not let the boss see you crying, Yetta.

YETTA (*between her sobs*)

I don't care. Let me alone!

SADIE

It's going to be the slack season.

YETTA (*straightening up and holding her handkerchief to her eyes*)

I—I guess I know that, too, all right.

SADIE

You—you ain't going to quit on account of Louis, are you?

YETTA

I—I— Oh, Sadie, I dasn't quit.

SADIE

Then, you better get busy on these thirty-fours.
(*She lays the armful of garments beside* YETTA'S *machine.* YETTA *takes one and mechanically puts it under the needle.* SADIE *watches her curiously for a moment, then gives her shoulder two or three little pats and goes back to her own machine just as* BLOOM *enters from the hall.*)

BLOOM

Nu; I guess we wasted enough time for one morning.
(*He begins picking up garments from the center table. The two girls start their machines and sew without turning their heads. The hurdy-gurdy, still further away, plays again.*)

CURTAIN

THE HAND OF SIVA

A MELODRAMA

CHARACTERS

HENRI DUROT..*an officer of the French Secret Service*
CAPTAIN ASHBY.....*of the Anglo-Indian Army*
MAJOR WELLINGTON....*attached to the General Staff*
KODAH KAHN.....*a sepoy sargeant*
MAHIB.....*Ashby's native orderly*

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THE HAND OF SIVA

TIME, *evening of a September day, 1914. The* PLACE *is* CAPTAIN ASHBY'S *room in a small French hotel, occupied by officers of an Anglo-Indian regiment. The room, which looks as if it might once have been the lounging or writing room, is comfortably furnished. There is a door at the left into the hall and a pair of French windows at the back opening upon a veranda or terrace. At the left is a fireplace with a fire burning. Before the fire are two armchairs, the larger one with its back to the window. Beside it is a light table large enough to play cards on. In the center of the stage is a large desk-table littered with books and papers. There are one or two other small chairs, a washstand, and* ASHBY'S *cot-bed, which is in the corner between the door and the window. There are two electric lamps with colored shades, which, when lighted, give the room a subdued and cozy aspect. One of the lamps stands on the desk and one on the mantel. The French windows have curtains of a thin material shirred on the sash. There is a tray with a bottle and glasses on the desk; also a tin of cigarettes, matches, etc. On one of the small chairs near the door is a violin case. When the curtain rises the room is dark except for the light from the fire and a little dull moonlight coming through the French window, one side of which is open.* ASHBY *enters from the terrace, goes rapidly to the desk and begins fumbling through the papers.*

ASHBY

Here they are. No; yesterday's orders of the day. Confound the luck!

(*He strikes a small bell, goes to an electric light switch beside the mantel and turns it. It lights the large lamp on the desk and the smaller one on the mantel. A native* ORDERLY *enters by the door at the right.*)

THE ORDERLY

The sahib rang?

ASHBY

You were here when Sergeant Ormington brought me a big blue envelope.

THE ORDERLY

Yes, sahib.

ASHBY

What did I do with it?

THE ORDERLY

The sahib put it on corner of table. I saw it there when the sahib had gone.

ASHBY

Hmm! That's all I wanted to know.

THE ORDERLY

The sahib has other orders?

ASHBY

You can bring up some coffee.

(THE ORDERLY *salutes and goes out.* ASHBY *resumes his search.*)

DUROT (*knocking and entering immediately*)

Good evening, Captain Ashby.

ASHBY (*looking up with a start*)
Hullo, Durot. I didn't hear you come in.

DUROT
Lost something?

ASHBY (*pulling out the desk drawer*)
A blue envelope. Rotten careless, of course. Thought I slipped the damned thing into my pocket. Never missed it till I went over to headquarters after dinner.

DUROT
You've looked everywhere?

ASHBY
Gad, yes! But I'll just run through once more on the chance.

DUROT
I shouldn't trouble to if I were you. You'll get it back in an hour, possibly sooner.

ASHBY (*straightening up*)
You think it was taken, do you?

DUROT
I don't think, m'sieur, I know. The affair has all the earmarks of the best Prussian technique.

ASHBY
Well, I must say you're damned unconcerned about it.

DUROT
On the contrary, I've already spent the best part of six days trying to unravel a series of similar thefts. There have been three known cases and probably a dozen unreported since your division went into camp.

ASHBY

See here, old chap, I've only the most casual acquaintance with you. All I know is that you're supposed to be a French captain, detailed with this regiment as a military observer. I'd like to know first where you come in on this?

DUROT

You've heard the old adage, "set a thief to catch a thief."

ASHBY

Then, you're—

DUROT

I am hoping, m'sieur, with the further assistance of a benign Providence and your own somewhat heavy-handed intelligence officers, to locate a light-fingered gentleman who tampers with the secret correspondence concerning the condition and morale of the British Colonial troops.

ASHBY

That may all be, but I'll trouble you to—

DUROT

If you insist on my credentials, Captain Ashby, I advise you to call up headquarters at once, and report the entire affair, unless you prefer to wait and get your blue envelope back without risking a reprimand for losing it—

ASHBY (*taking up the phone*)

Reprimand be damned! I'll just call up Fitzmore and see what he makes of all this. Hullo! No, I want division headquarters.

DUROT (*continuing as if his speech had not been interrupted*)
—and perhaps our reckless Prussian friend into the bargain.

ASHBY
Confound you, if you know who has the envelope, why don't you say so?

DUROT
My dear fellow, don't be too literal. Your reports were taken anonymously and will doubtless be returned without signature.
(THE ORDERLY *enters noiselessly with a tray and a coffee percolator, having a lamp under it.*)

ASHBY
By George, this idea of spies always did get on my nerves.

DUROT
It needn't. Unless I am very much mistaken, all we need is a little patience.

THE ORDERLY (*after setting the tray on the small table*)
The sahib's coffee— The sahib has other orders?

ASHBY
No, unless Captain Durot wants to ask you some questions?

DUROT (*coolly*)
Thanks, I've already talked to your orderly.
(THE ORDERLY *salutes and goes out.*)

ASHBY
Well, by gad! Would you mind telling me when you talked to my orderly?

DUROT

This morning when I was looking into a little experience reported by Captain Bivert upstairs.

ASHBY

Then you mean that Bivert—

DUROT

Quite so. The cases are exactly alike. Only Bivert's missing reports had already been found when I got there. They were gone just three-quarters of an hour.

ASHBY

You've been damned quiet about the whole thing.

DUROT

Quiet, m'sieur, is an almost indispensable attribute of my profession.

ASHBY (*looking toward the door through which* THE ORDERLY *has just disappeared*)

You seem pretty certain Mahib wasn't mixed up in it.

DUROT (*seating himself in a chair by the coffee tray*)

One must never be too sure of anything, m'sieur, but if I were looking for a safe bet, I'd offer you odds that the man we're looking for is a commissioned, or at least a non-commissioned, officer.

ASHBY (*walking up and down nervously*)

Rotten business! It makes you feel as though you couldn't trust your own best pals. Why, there isn't a chap in the regiment I shouldn't have staked my life on.

DUROT

At any rate, there's no point in working yourself

into a stew about it. Let me pour you a cup of coffee.

ASHBY

Perhaps you're right, but it seems as if we ought to be doing something.

DUROT (*as he pours coffee*)

You might begin by shutting those windows while you're up. There's a devil of a draft here.

ASHBY

Certainly.

(*He goes to the window, shuts both sides of it.*)

DUROT

Sugar?

ASHBY (*still at the window*)

No, thanks. I'll take mine clear.

DUROT (*rising*)

That's yours, then, on the arm of the big chair.

ASHBY (*returning from the window*)

Much obliged.

DUROT (*going to the mantel*)

If you don't mind, m'sieur, I'll switch off the lamps. The glare seems to hit me in the eyes.

ASHBY

Suit yourself, of course.

(*He sits down in the larger chair with his back to the French windows and takes up his cup of coffee.*)

DUROT

I can somehow think more clearly in the dark. (*He switches off the electric lamps, leaving the room*

lighted only by the glow from the fire.) Perhaps, now, if we put our heads together, m'sieur.

(DUROT *remains standing beside the fire with one elbow on the mantel. He is facing* ASHBY *and is consequently where he can keep his eyes on the French windows.*)

ASHBY (*stirring his coffee*)

Fire ahead. It's all beyond me.

DUROT

To begin with, what was the name of that native sergeant Ferguson told us about the other day, the religious fanatic?

ASHBY

They're all religious fanatics, more or less.

DUROT

I mean the fellow they say spends all his spare time hanging around the wounded German prisoners as if he might be looking for some one.

ASHBY (*slapping the arm of his chair*)

By Jove, why didn't I think of that devil before! Come to think of it, I saw him loafing in a doorway across the road when Wellington and I went over to breakfast this morning. He sort of faded away directly he saw us. I'll bet you five pounds to five francs he's the man we're looking for.

DUROT

At least, he's one of the men we're looking for, Captain Ashby.

(*The shadow of a man appears on the curtains of the French window.*)

ASHBY

He's a First Sergeant, Cameron's Company, Second Regiment, enlisted from Rangoon district, Burmah. His name is Kodah Kahn. I'll phone Cameron and have him sent over. It won't do any harm to have a look at him.

(*He is about to get up and go to the phone.*)

DUROT (*in a whisper*)

Quiet! There's somebody at the window now.

(*He takes* ASHBY'S *wrist.*)

ASHBY

If the fool's come back, he'll get more than an envelope this time.

DUROT

Hush! Get as close to the window as you can. When he gets into the middle of the room, I'll switch up the light.

(DUROT *stands with his hand on the switch.* ASHBY *begins cautiously making his way toward the window but knocks against a chair, which falls over with considerable noise. The shadow disappears from the window.*)

ASHBY

Damnation!

(*He snatches a revolver from his holster and rushes to the window.*)

DUROT

It's no use. He's heard us.

ASHBY

By God! I'll have a look at him, anyway.

(DUROT *switches on the light. As* ASHBY *almost*

reaches the windows, they open and MAJOR WELLINGTON *appears on the threshold.*)

WELLINGTON (*suavely*)

So there you are! Thought perhaps you'd turned in. I was just along when you flashed your light.

ASHBY (*taken aback*)

Hullo, Wellington. I say, by Jove, do you know we almost made a—

DUROT

Captain Ashby and I were just wondering where we'd pick up a third at cards—

ASHBY (*confused*)

Er—exactly. You chaps know each other, don't you?

DUROT

I've met Major Wellington at headquarters once or twice.

WELLINGTON (*advancing into the room*)

How are you, Captain Durot? (*He offers his left hand.*) Pardon my left hand.

DUROT

It is a compliment, m'sieur. In my country we give the left hand to our friends because it is nearest the heart.

WELLINGTON (*looking at* ASHBY, *who still holds his automatic revolver in his left hand*)

I say, Ashby, you weren't looking for a card partner with that automatic, were you?

ASHBY (*flustered and realizing for the first time that he still holds the weapon*)

Er—no— Fact is, we're in the devil of a mess here.

I was for phoning Fitzmore at headquarters, but Durot's got some silly-ass idea of his own.

WELLINGTON

About what?

ASHBY

Let me take your overcoat first. There, we'll all sit down to a peg of something and talk it over.

(*He starts to help* WELLINGTON *off with his military overcoat.*)

WELLINGTON

Go a bit easy, will you! I've got a queer kink in my right arm. Gets bothersome damp nights. Deucedly thick outside.

DUROT

Yes, regular Burmah weather.

WELLINGTON

Burmah weather? What's that?

ASHBY (*as he throws* WELLINGTON'S *coat over the back of a chair*)

Didn't know you'd been in the East, Durot?

DUROT

I haven't, but I thought perhaps Major Wellington—

WELLINGTON (*picking up a cigarette from the table and lighting it*)

You've got me there. I've never been east of Cairo myself.

DUROT

Then you're as ignorant about the ways of these sepoys as I am.

WELLINGTON

Don't know a thing about them except what I've picked up lately.

ASHBY

Major Wellington was transferred to us on staff duty from England.

DUROT

They don't interest you, perhaps?

WELLINGTON

Not particularly.

(*There is a sound of native drums from the encampment. It continues off and on throughout the rest of the play.* WELLINGTON *seems somewhat unpleasantly affected by the sound of the drums. He lays down the cigarette and begins pouring himself a glass of brandy.*)

DUROT

But their music—the drums especially. There's something wonderful about it, you can't deny that.

WELLINGTON (*pulling himself together*)

Can't say I've ever paid much attention to their drums.

DUROT

Of course, it's a matter of taste.

WELLINGTON

I suppose so. (*He tosses off his brandy.*) Um! That's better!

DUROT

How about a rubber of three-handed auction?

WELLINGTON

I'm game.

ASHBY (*without much enthusiasm*)
Right-o!

WELLINGTON
What was it you said, Ashby, about being in a mess? What sort of a mess?

ASHBY
There's no use beating about the bush, major. I've lost an envelope full of special correspondence.

WELLINGTON
Hmm! That's bad. I suppose you've reported to the old man, haven't you?

ASHBY
Not yet.

WELLINGTON
Well, then, take my advice and wait till morning. There's no use letting yourself in for a wigging until you're sure they don't turn up safe and sound.

ASHBY
I'm afraid there's no question about what's become of them.

WELLINGTON
You mean you think there's been something irregular?

DUROT
On the contrary, m'sieur, everything has been according to the time-honored procedure of the Prussian Spy Bureau. There is no telling how many times the ruse may have worked successfully.

WELLINGTON
What ruse do you mean?

DUROT

The ruse of returning a lost paper before the owner has missed it, or at least soon enough to make him think it has only been mislaid. There also seems to be a natural reluctance which prevents certain gentlemen from reporting such temporary absences.

ASHBY

Devil of a trick, eh? He says this is the third known case since Sunday.

WELLINGTON

I don't quite follow you. Third known case of what?

DUROT

Your war office has been getting exhaustive data covering the condition and morale of the Indian troops. These detailed reports, mostly written in Hindustani, are made out by trusted native officers who go about among the men and pick up all sorts of camp talk. It's important for your generals to know the weak spots in any unit; just where hidden discontent may be smoldering; just which ones are apt to stand to the bayonet and which aren't. It's equally important for the enemy to know the same thing.

WELLINGTON

By gad, I must say you seem to be pretty well informed.

ASHBY

Captain Durot is detailed by the French Intelligence Department to help our own men.

WELLINGTON (*to* DUROT *with a slight sneer*)

I didn't know that secret agents were in the habit of being quite so delightfully frank.

DUROT

The nature of the case, m'sieur, determines the amount of secrecy required. I have sometimes obtained excellent results even after admitting my identity and mission to the suspect himself.

WELLINGTON (*apparently much amused*)

And so you were sitting in the dark, eh, waiting for a guileless Prussian spy who speaks Hindustani?

DUROT

The idea seems to amuse you.

WELLINGTON

It strikes me as damned grotesque, to say the least. Sort of thing I used to read in penny dreadfuls. However, it's quite out of my line.

DUROT

Exactly.

WELLINGTON (*speaking more briskly*)

Come, let's get to playing. I must knock at ten-thirty sharp and write up reports.

ASHBY

You'll find a pack of cards on the desk.

DUROT

There are no cards here, m'sieur.

ASHBY

Hell, I could have sworn I saw some there when I was pawing over the papers, the last clean deck.

DUROT

Shall I ring for your orderly?

WELLINGTON

Don't bother. I've some new decks in my own room. I'll run up and get them—only take me a minute.

ASHBY

Hate to trouble you.

WELLINGTON

Not at all.

(WELLINGTON *goes out by the hall door.*)

ASHBY

Devil of a nice chap, Wellington.

DUROT

Undoubtedly.

ASHBY

Mustn't mind if he chaffs you a bit sharply about the secret service. It *is* a little irritating to us, y' know, to have an outsider called in. Looks as if our own men weren't up to their work, rather.

DUROT (*picking up a violin case*)

I didn't know you played the violin, Ashby.

ASHBY

I don't. The thing belongs to Wellington—bought it or borrowed it, I don't know which—seems to have a perfect passion for playing the damned thing.

DUROT

Hmm, that's interesting.

ASHBY

Gad, you'd think it was a child the way he takes care of it. Always leaves it either here or in Bivert's room, because he says his own room's too damp.

DUROT

Exactly. Where is his room, by the way?

ASHBY

Almost directly above. He ought to be back by now.

(*The door opens.* WELLINGTON *enters with two packs of cards in his hands.*)

DUROT

Speaking of the devil—

WELLINGTON (*tossing the cards on the table*)

A blue deck and a red deck, both brand new.

DUROT (*laughing*)

Reckless extravagance. One might almost think he was in his own club at home, eh, Captain Ashby?

ASHBY

Yes—if it wasn't for this infernal—

WELLINGTON (*sitting down at the table*)

Come, come, let's try to forget about your blue envelope for a few minutes.

ASHBY (*still thinking of the lost papers*)

Hindustani isn't a very popular language. Most of our younger officers can't read a word of it. That pins it down pretty close.

DUROT

At least it excludes Major Wellington and myself.

WELLINGTON

If I was in your place, Ashby, I'd take a chance on searching every one of these confounded native orderlies.

DUROT

Whoever the spy turns out to be, gentlemen, he's too clever to let us catch him with anything in his possession. You can count on that.

(THE ORDERLY *enters from the hall.*)

THE ORDERLY

Sahib.

ASHBY

Well, what do you want now?

THE ORDERLY (*advancing and extending a blue envelope*)

The sahib's blue envelope. I find him just now, in hall near by door to terrace.

(ASHBY *takes the envelope and glances into it.*)

DUROT (*glances at his watch*)

Ah, less than fifty minutes. They work with absolute precision, eh, major?

ASHBY

Gad, not one missing!

WELLINGTON (*lighting a cigarette*)

It's an even money bet you dropped it there yourself.

ASHBY (*to* THE ORDERLY)

How many men have been through the hall since dinner?

THE ORDERLY

I not know, sahib. Officers, perhaps five or six. Myself, perhaps other orderlies. I not know how many.

ASHBY

You haven't noticed any one from the outside hanging about, any other native officers for instance? (THE ORDERLY *appears to hesitate.*) Well, why don't you answer me?

THE ORDERLY

Subahdar Kodah Kahn, to ask for Captain Cameron, sahib.

(ASHBY *and* WELLINGTON *glance at one another.*)

ASHBY

Subahdar Kodah Kahn, eh?

DUROT

Where is he now?

THE ORDERLY

When I tell him Captain Cameron no here, he go back toward cantonment, sahib.

ASHBY (*much excited*)

By gad, that fellow *knew* Cameron was on duty at headquarters from eight to ten.

WELLINGTON (*to* ASHBY)

Steady now—steady!

THE ORDERLY

The sahib has orders?

DUROT

Go into the hall and wait. We may want to send a message.

(THE ORDERLY *salutes and goes out.*)

WELLINGTON

Well?

ASHBY (*with conviction*)

We've got him. There's no question about it.

(WELLINGTON *appears slightly amused.*)

DUROT

Major Wellington is still skeptical?

ASHBY

But the devil of it is how to get the beggar dead to rights.

WELLINGTON

If you want my advice, you'll phone Fitzmore and have this Kodah Kahn put under arrest without evidence.

ASHBY

It will kick up the deuce of a row with the natives if we arrest him and fail to prove what he's been up to.

DUROT

Quite so. We must send for him and have a talk first.

WELLINGTON (*dryly*)

Perhaps Captain Durot thinks he is clever enough to make an experienced spy betray himself.

DUROT

Perhaps.

ASHBY

By gad, Durot's right all the same. (*He strikes a bell.*) We can't afford to make a mistake. Suppose the man's innocent?

DUROT

If he is, I promise you, gentlemen, he shall leave the room without any idea that he was under suspicion. (THE ORDERLY *enters.* DUROT *takes out a notebook and pencil and writes rapidly.*)

THE ORDERLY

The sahib rang?

ASHBY

Captain Durot has some orders for you.

DUROT (*folding his slip of paper*)

Send this to cantonment. Have them find Subahdar

Kodah Kahn. Tell him the French sahib wants to talk to him in Captain Ashby's room. Tell him to wait on the terrace till we call him in.

ASHBY

You understand?

THE ORDERLY

Yes, sahib.

(*He salutes and goes out.*)

WELLINGTON

Ridiculous! I'll take you for a guinea apiece that Durot fails to land his man.

DUROT

Done!

ASHBY

Just time, anyhow, for one rubber before they get back.

DUROT (*spreading one of the packs face down on the table*)

Low deals. Sixpence a point.

WELLINGTON

Short and sweet, eh?

DUROT

One never knows, m'sieur, when we shall have another opportunity of playing together. (*Each man draws a card and throws it face up on the table.*) Ashby gets it.

(ASHBY *sits down to deal.* WELLINGTON *rises and goes to the center table and pours out another tall glass of brandy and soda.* DUROT *goes to the mantel and takes a cigarette from a tray and lights it. The native drums begin again louder than before.*)

ASHBY

There they go again.

(*He deals.*)

DUROT (*listening and watching* WELLINGTON)

Drums. There's nothing in the world like drums. I've heard Russian drums in Manchuria. I've heard native drums in West Africa. I've heard Bulgarian drums and British drums and Italian drums. It's the same everywhere. They get under the skin of civilization. They give you the real savage soul of the devils that play on them or march to them.

ASHBY (*listening*)

That's some sort of a religious ritual they're at now.

(*He goes on dealing.*)

DUROT

I can readily believe it, m'sieur. I can almost see the priests making ready for sacrifice in some hidden temple.

WELLINGTON

Beastly din, I call it. Gets on a fellow's nerves. It's worse than shrapnel.

ASHBY

Imagine what it does to chaps that have to fight 'em in their own country. How would you like to be out in the hills as I've been, with a corporal's squad and not another human being in sight for miles, and all the time hearing their infernal drums from every point of the compass, so close you thought you could almost touch them?

DUROT

Or worse still, to fall into their hands and if they had a particular grudge against you—

WELLINGTON (*with an attempt at a laugh*)
I must say you fellows are in a pleasant frame of mind to-night.
(*He picks up his cards.*)

ASHBY (*counting his cards*)
Sorry, but I've got fourteen cards. Will you draw or make it a new deal?

WELLINGTON
Make it a new deal.

DUROT (*as* ASHBY *gathers up the cards for a new deal*)
I was thinking about a yarn I once heard. It might interest you, Major Wellington. There was a German Secret Service agent who gave violin lessons in Rangoon, ten or twelve years ago—

ASHBY
If you mean the Von Frantzius case, I was stationed in the same district at that time myself.

DUROT
Then perhaps you could tell us what he looked like.

ASHBY (*shuffling the cards*)
Never happened to see the poor blighter.

DUROT
But you can tell us what happened.

ASHBY (*beginning to deal*)
I'd rather hear your own version of it.

WELLINGTON
The French version of the adventures of a German spy in an English camp?

DUROT
Exactly, m'sieur, with a few Hindoos thrown in for

good measure. Quite apropos under the circumstances.

WELLINGTON (*sorting his cards*)
I'll have to take your word for it.

DUROT
This Von Frantzius came to Burmah and lived as an Englishman at Rangoon. He was a remarkable linguist, spoke several native dialects. He'd have got through with his work, which was a study of the reorganization of the Indian Army, if he hadn't taken to an equally intimate investigation of Brahmin temples.

ASHBY
To make it short, the silly fool violated one of them.

DUROT
They caught him red-handed in the sanctuary, and he dropped out of sight.

ASHBY
Gad, there was something of a scandal. We thought he was English, y' know.

DUROT
They took him back in the hills, if you know what that means.

WELLINGTON (*slowly*)
No, I don't know what it means.

ASHBY
It means being subjected to every unthinkable kind of mental and physical torture, but never actually killed outright. The thing only happens once every three or four years and it's generally hushed up

because they never get any direct evidence. But I could tell you stories would make you shiver for a week at the sight of a white turban.

(*The figure of* KODAH KAHN, *a tall sepoy in a white robe, appears at the French window. Both* ASHBY *and* WELLINGTON *have their backs toward the window.* DUROT *is facing the window. His eyes meet those of the sepoy, but he gives no sign of seeing him.*)

WELLINGTON

You needn't, thanks.

DUROT (*watching* WELLINGTON *more closely*)

It seems the victims are always mysteriously returned to their friends, Major Wellington. I suppose as a sort of horrible warning.

WELLINGTON

Come back like Ashby's envelope of reports, eh?

(DUROT *strikes a match and lights the lamp under the percolator.*)

DUROT

But with this difference, Captain Ashby's blue envelope was unharmed.

ASHBY

While the poor wretches we're telling you about were invariably stark, raving mad and usually died in a week or two.

WELLINGTON

And I suppose this Von Frantzius—

DUROT

No. I believe he is the single exception that proves the rule.

ASHBY

Perhaps it's a bit harder to unsettle your Prussian's reason than it is your Englishman's.

DUROT

Perhaps. At any rate, as I happened to find out while on duty inside the enemy's lines not so very long ago, a gentleman of the same name is at present one of the most highly trusted agents of the Prussian Secret Service.

WELLINGTON (*with a slight sneer*)

I begin to see the connection—the Prussian spy who speaks Hindustani like a native, eh?

DUROT

You get my point exactly.

ASHBY

All the same, I shouldn't care to be in his shoes, wherever he is.

DUROT

Nor I.

ASHBY

If Herr Von Frantzius ever goes to India again or if India ever comes to him—

DUROT

The result is apt to be rather ghastly.

WELLINGTON

What do you mean when you say "if India ever comes to him"?

ASHBY

You can't conceive the appalling patience of the oriental mind. Why, Cameron tells me that some

of his older men recruited from the Rangoon district still talk about Von Frantzius. He's often caught them at it. They seem to think it is only a matter of time before some Brahmin ferrets the poor blighter out and sticks a knife into him.

DUROT

Ferguson tells me they even examine the dead in front of the trenches and the wounded in the field hospitals.

WELLINGTON

Huh! There's precious little chance. He may have changed a good deal in ten years.

(*The drums after having ebbed away become louder.*)

DUROT

I don't think they depend on recognizing his features, Major Wellington.

WELLINGTON

What do you mean?

DUROT

There's probably something else, some sort of mark they put on him years ago. I think they call it the hand of Siva.

WELLINGTON (*repeating the words slowly, as if fascinated against his will*)

The hand of Siva.

(*The figure of the sepoy again appears in the window.*)

ASHBY

Yes, that's it. Rummy sound to it, eh? The hand of Siva. I saw it once myself on a poor devil of an Irish lieutenant.

WELLINGTON (*slowly*)

Then you know what it looks like.

ASHBY

Well, rather. It's like the print of a huge iron hand burned into the flesh of the right forearm, just below the elbow. You couldn't mistake it in a thousand years, or get rid of it, either, if you had it on you. (*At some point during the preceding speech,* DUROT *has taken up one of the empty coffee cups and filled it from the coffee percolator. He now stands beside* WELLINGTON *with the coffee cup in his hand.*)

WELLINGTON (*laying down his cards*)

You'll excuse me, gentlemen, but a story like that—

ASHBY

Leaves a bad taste in your mouth, eh?

DUROT

Try this hot cup of coffee, m'sieur.

(WELLINGTON *pushes back his chair and* DUROT, *with a seemingly awkward movement, overturns the cup of coffee on* WELLINGTON'S *right forearm and wrist.*)

ASHBY (*as* WELLINGTON *rises with an exclamation of pain*)

I say, what are you doing?

DUROT

A thousand pardons, m'sieur. I have hurt you.

WELLINGTON (*grasping his right wrist with his left hand*)

It's nothing. It's of no consequence.

ASHBY

By Jove, that stuff must burn like hot lead. Roll back your sleeve, old chap.

DUROT

It was infernally awkward of me.

WELLINGTON

I'm quite all right, thanks.

ASHBY (*going to the table as if to strike the bell*)

I'll call Mahib. Wonderful chap, Mahib. He'll fix you a dressing that'll take the sting out of your arm in twenty seconds.

WELLINGTON (*controlling himself with difficulty*)

No, no! I—I tell you it's nothing. I prefer to fix it myself, thanks, later.

DUROT

I insist upon helping you, m'sieur, as a penance.

WELLINGTON (*almost savagely*)

Keep your hands off me, can't you?

ASHBY

I say, there's nothing to fly into a fit about.

WELLINGTON (*regaining control of himself*)

Sorry, but my nerves are a bit ragged—stomach, I think, ruined. Fact is I can't bear to have any one touch my skin. You'll have to excuse me.

ASHBY (*a little doubtfully*)

Of course, if that's the way you feel about it.

DUROT

I understand, m'sieur, perfectly.

(*The figure of* KODAH KAHN *disappears from the window.*)

WELLINGTON

Sorry to break up the game before it begins, but if—if you don't mind, I think I'll turn in.

DUROT

You won't wait and help us thresh out this business of the envelope with Kodah Kahn, then?

WELLINGTON (*quite himself again*)

No, thanks. I think I've had about enough for one evening.

(*He picks up his coat and cap and takes a step or two toward the hall door.*)

DUROT

You'll find Mahib waiting in the hall if you change your mind about having that arm of yours looked after.

WELLINGTON (*stopping and apparently deciding not to go through the hall*)

Don't think of it again. I'll just step out on the terrace for a breath of air before I go up. Good night, gentlemen.

DUROT

Pleasant dreams.

ASHBY

See you in the morning.

(WELLINGTON *goes out by the French window.*)

DUROT

Well?

ASHBY (*beginning to understand*)

He wouldn't let you touch his arm. I say, you know there's something—

(*There is a scream from outside.*)

ASHBY

What's that?

DUROT (*seizing* ASHBY'S *arm*)

Quiet! Be still!

ASHBY

Let me go!

DUROT

It's the end of the story, m'sieur.

ASHBY

You mean that Wellington—

DUROT

The man who just left this room was Von Frantzius—

ASHBY

By gad, I don't believe it. I—

(*He breaks away from* DUROT *and runs toward the window. Before he reaches it,* WELLINGTON *staggers backwards into the room with one sleeve of his coat completely torn away. He sways for a moment and then falls in a heap before* ASHBY, *clutching his feet. The figure of* KODAH KAHN *appears in the window. He is wiping a native knife on the sleeve of his robe.*)

DUROT

Well?

KODAH KAHN

Look at his arm, sahib. The French sahib have made no mistake.

ASHBY

By God, what's the meaning of all this?

KODAH KAHN (*speaking quite calmly as he thrusts the knife into his girdle*)

Your pardon, sahib, for the disturbance, but I have just met an old friend.

CURTAIN

THE HERO OF SANTA MARIA

A RIDICULOUS TRAGEDY

CHARACTERS

NATHAN FISHER.....*Known as "Nate"*
MARTIN FISHER.....*Known as "Marty"*
ELMIRA FISHER
EDWARD MARTIN FISHER.....*Known as "Toady"*
JAMES MERRYWEATHER HINES,
Known as the "Squire," or "Heinie"
BERNARD P. FOSS
THEODORE Q. WILKINSON

"The Hero of Santa Maria" was originally presented by the Washington Square Players, at the Comedy Theater, New York, on the night of February 12, 1917.

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THE HERO OF SANTA MARIA

The SCENE *is the living room of the* FISHER *home. A scrupulously neat room of the late horse-hair and wax-flower period.*

At the back is the "front door" and near it a window looking toward the street. At the left is a door leading into MARTY'S *bedroom, and at the right a door leading into a room sacred to* NATE.

Over MARTY'S *door is a printed sign "Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law." On the right wall is a crayon portrait of* NATE *in G. A. R. uniform. The picture is draped with small American flags.*

In the center of the room is a table with two stiff chairs beside it. There are also articles of furniture, including another small table with a drawer in it. Among the knickknacks on the center table is a plush-covered family album.

The TIME *is about ten in the morning of a pleasant spring day.*

When the curtain rises the stage is empty. Immediately the street doors open and MARTY *peers cautiously into the room. He then enters and closes the door behind him.*

MARTY

Hey! Anybody home? (*He listens, then goes cautiously to the door at the right, opens it, and listens again.*) Hullo, Nate, are y' in there? (*Evidently*

satisfied that the room is empty, he tiptoes across to the door at the left, stands before it, and raps softly and with precision. He then squats down and addresses the occupant of the room through the keyhole.) Pssst! Toady! *(Receiving no response, he looks about anxiously and again speaks into the keyhole, in a slightly louder voice.)* Psst! Toady!

A SLEEPY VOICE FROM INSIDE
What d'you want?

MARTY
Open the door. It's me, Uncle Marty.

THE VOICE
Oh!
(A bolt is shot and TOADY FISHER *stands on the threshold, rubbing his eyes.* MARTY *produces two bottles of beer and a paper bag, which he places on the center table.)*

TOADY *(stretching his arms)*
Oh hum!

MARTY
Wake up. . . . I've brought yer breakfast.

TOADY *(glancing at the clock)*
You took yer time about it.

MARTY
If I'd snuck so much as a doughnut out of our own kitchen, yer Aunt Elmira'd been wise to us in a minute. She's tighter than the skin on a prize pig, she is.

TOADY
Well, what you got?

MARTY

A couple of bottles of beer and a fried egg sandwich from Hopper's Hotel.

TOADY (*examining the supplies*)

Huh, is that all?

MARTY (*looking into his hat, which he takes off for the first time*)

I had a pair of fried fish cakes in the top of my hat. Guess I must lost 'em when I tipped it to Mrs. Sprudder down by the corner.

TOADY (*pulling up a chair to the table*)

Say, get me a glass and a plate, can't you?

MARTY (*seizing his arm*)

No, you don't; not out here. They'll spot you sure.

TOADY

Rats! Pa wouldn't have me arrested.

MARTY

You ain't lived with him for sixty-seven years like I have.

TOADY

He can't pin it on me that I ever seen his fifty dollars.

MARTY

I reckon everybody knows it left town along about the same time you did.

TOADY (*beginning to eat the sandwich*)

Well, I ain't got it now, that's a cinch.

MARTY

Look here, who's running this family reconciliation, me or you?

TOADY (*his mouth full*)
Aw, can the prodigal-son stuff, can it.

MARTY
Now, Toady, don't go and spoil it all.

TOADY
I wouldn't have stopped off in no flea-bitten burg like this only I was sick of bumming my way on freights. All I want's enough coin to get me to Chicago like a gentleman.

MARTY
You don't know how much I've missed you. Why, I can't even take a couple of drinks no more without crying. Go on in there like a good boy and mebbe I'll run up to the barber shop and borrow the *Police Gazette* for you to read.

TOADY (*getting up*)
I give you fair warning. I ain't going to sit in that hole all day.

MARTY
You'll be safe. Even Elmira daresn't put her foot in my room.

TOADY (*picking up one of the beer bottles and the sandwich and moving toward the door at the left*)
Aw, all right! All right!

MARTY
I'll steal something nice for your dinner, honest to gawd I will. Some cold banana pudding.

TOADY (*wearily*)
All right! All right!
(MARTY *pushes* TOADY *through the door and closes it.*)

MARTY

Now lock it on the inside. An' don't you open your head except I give you the high sign.

TOADY (*from inside*)

All right!

(*The bolt is shot.* MARTY *listens a moment, then goes back to the center table and picks up the remaining bottle of beer just as the street door opens and* ELMIRA FISHER *enters. She has a letter in her hand.*)

ELMIRA (*in a rasping voice*)

Well, what are you doing home at this time of day? (MARTY, *startled, turns and switches the bottle of beer behind him.*)

MARTY

Eh?

ELMIRA

You heard what I said.

MARTY

So help me, I—

ELMIRA

You've been drinking. I can smell it on you from here.

MARTY

That's a nice way for a sister to talk, ain't it?

ELMIRA

I'd like to forget I was your sister.

MARTY

I ain't laying nothing in the way to hinder you trying. (*He makes a move toward the street door.*)

ELMIRA

Where you going now?

MARTY

Mebbe I'm going back to sweep the court-house and then again mebbe I'm going fishing.

ELMIRA

Fishing! Huh!

MARTY

Well, fishing's respectable, ain't it? It's mentioned in the Bible, ain't it? I guess that'll hold you. The Lord said to his disciples, go out and dig bait, or something—

ELMIRA

Martin Henry Fisher, you're a blaspheming good-for-nothing—

MARTY

Aw, dry up!

ELMIRA

You'll lose your job, and serve you right, too.

MARTY

Needn't let that wear on your nose. I'm a political appointee, I am. I've got influence in Forkville.

ELMIRA (*turning on him*)

Influence! You've got influence all right. Bad influence, that's what you've got. It was your influence made a thief out of your own nephew Edward and damned his immortal soul for him.

MARTY

I ain't responsible for Toady. He ain't my son.

ELMIRA

It don't matter whose son he is—

MARTY

Aw, lay off!

ELMIRA

What's that you're hiding under your coattails?

MARTY (*realizing that further concealment of the beer bottle is useless*)

Just a plain bottle of beer registered under the Pure Food Act to contain five per cent alcohol.

ELMIRA

I knew it! So that's what you keep hidden in that pig-sty of a room of yours.

(*She advances to the door at the left.*)

MARTY (*in alarm*)

Hold on there. Where you going?

ELMIRA

To bust in that door if I have to take an ax to it. I'm going to clear this house of every drop of devil's rum you've had the indecency to bring into it.

MARTY (*getting between* ELMIRA *and the door*)

No, you don't! I own one-third of this house the same as you and Nate. Take a squint at that sign over my door: "Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law." You keep out of my place, and I'll keep out of yours. Don't have nothing more to do with me than you can help and I'll return the favor, all right. But, by cricky, if you so much as set one of your flat feet acrost that sill, I'll have a warrant out for you.

(MARTY *has backed up against the door and* ELMIRA *stands glaring at him.* NATHAN FISHER *enters from the street unnoticed in time to hear the last line.*)

ELMIRA (*to* MARTY)
You—you viper.

NATE (*gruffly*)
Here, what's going on?

MARTY
Howdy, Nate. I was just going out.

ELMIRA
It would be a God's mercy if you'd go for good.

NATE (*coming toward the table*)
It ain't likely he'll oblige us that far. What can't be helped has got to be endured.

MARTY
Amen, that goes for both sides of the family.

NATE (*picking up the letter from the table and peering at it*)
When did this come?

ELMIRA
I just fetched it from the post office.

NATE (*feeling in his pockets*)
I must have left my specks in my other coat. Here, Marty, where's it from?
(*He hands the letter to* MARTY *and sits down.*)

MARTY (*reading from the corner of the envelope*)
Fourteen-eighteen F Street, Washington, D. C.

NATE
Huh!

ELMIRA
Give it here to me.

MARTY
Don't get in a twitter. I'm doing this.

NATE
Well, why don't you open it?
(MARTY *deliberately tears open the envelope and shakes out the letter.*)

MARTY (*reading from the letter*)
MR. NATHAN FISHER, Forkville, Indiana.
Dear Sir: Our Mr. Gray has again looked into the evidence upon which you propose to base your fourth application for pension as a veteran of the Civil War, and we regret that in our opinion it is not sufficient to warrant us going further with the case. The records clearly show that you were drafted into the army March 14th, 1864, and had not left training camp at the close of hostilities.
There is, however, one possibility, to which we call your attention. We understand that the Honorable Bernard P. Foss is a fellow citizen of yours. Mr. Foss is doubtless well known to you, and if willing to bring his personal influence to bear in your behalf could undoubtedly induce the Board of Pensions to take favorable action.
We herewith enclose bill for services to date, trusting that they have been entirely satisfactory and that our suggestion in regard to Mr. Foss will prove helpful. Yours respectfully,
DODSON & GRIFFIN,
Attorneys at Law.

NATE (*with bitter resignation*)

That settles it, consarn 'em! Old Foss wouldn't lift a finger if I was drowning.

ELMIRA

How much is the bill?

MARTY

Eighty-seven dollars.

ELMIRA

The robbers!

NATE (*between his teeth*)

That's it, robbers! The hull country's in the hands of a bunch of dirty political crooks. If fellers like Squire Hines and Ted Wilkinson had an ounce of red-blooded patriotism, they wouldn't stand to see a soldier of the Rebellion turned out of his nation's history.

MARTY

Haw! haw!

ELMIRA

You act like you seen something funny in paying out eighty-seven dollars for nothing.

MARTY

I reckon it takes a smarter liar than Nate to fool 'em in Washington.

NATE

Who's a liar? Ain't I marched in every Decoration Day parade for forty years? Ain't I a member of the G. A. R. Post, Number Ninety-two?

ELMIRA

Not to count being a deacon and an officer of the Sunday School.

MARTY

Being a Bo's'un in the Baptist Church don't entitle you to nothing this side of the Golden Gate.

ELMIRA

You're a low-down blaspheming likker snake.

MARTY

Well, as Toady used to say, mebbe it's better to be soaked in rum than vinegar.

(ELMIRA *begins to whimper.*)

NATE

I told you never to mention that scallywag's name in this house. Ain't it enough misfortune to be cheated out of sixteen hundred dollars back pension and a regular pension twice a month without you forever reminding me that I'm father of a thief?

MARTY (*glancing apprehensively at the bedroom door*)

You hadn't ought to be so hard and unforgiving. Like as not Toady'll turn out a credit to the family yet.

NATE (*bitterly*)

I never had an ounce of comfort out of him all the days of his life and I never expect to.

MARTY

Supposing he was to come home—I'm only saying supposing.

NATE (*bringing his fist down*)

I'd have him in jail, that's where I'd have him. He's a liar and a drunkard and a thief. There ain't anything bad enough to call him, nothing!

MARTY

Hold on! You don't have to yell.

ELMIRA

There's Squire Hines now.

NATE

Eh! Who?

ELMIRA

Squire Hines. He's coming up the walk!

NATE (*confused between his anger at* TOADY *and his anger over the pension*)

He's another one of 'em, damn 'em! They're all of a piece, conspiring to keep a man out of his rights. Darn the hull pack of 'em.

ELMIRA

Nate!

NATE

He'd better keep out of here. I got scores to settle with him.

MARTY

You ain't thinking of the editorial he wrote the time Toady was up for throwing the dead calf down Eben Fosdick's well? The one where he said the father was responsible for the sins of his son?

NATE

I ain't saying what I'm thinking—

MARTY

'Cause you'd oughtn't to blame a newspaper editor for thinking things out in an uncommon way.

(*There is a knock at the door.* ELMIRA *hesitates and looks at* NATE. *The knock is repeated.*)

NATE (*to* ELMIRA)

You heard him knock, didn't you?

(ELMIRA *opens the street door,* SQUIRE HINES *enters pompously with his hat in his hand. The others regard him suspiciously without speaking.*)

NATE

Well.

HINES

Mr. Fisher, sir, I realize that under ordinary circumstances I would not be a welcome visitor in your home.

MARTY

I guess you're about right on that.

HINES

I feel, however, that in view of what has so recently and unexpectedly transpired, all petty rancors and animosities should be swept aside. I come, friends, as the bearer of sad but glorious news, which to-night will thrill the national conscience and set the hearts of every man and woman in the state beating high with pride and sorrow.

ELMIRA

Well, we're listening to you.

HINES

To be as brief as possible; my paper has just received a dispatch from the Associated Press, dated this morning.

MARTY

No wonder you're excited. I bet it's about the first time the *Bugle's* had a piece of news less than a couple of days old.

HINES (*impressively*)
Your levity, sir, is ill timed. The dispatch to which I refer recounts the heroic death of your brother's only son, Edward Martin Fisher.

MARTY
Eh?

NATE (*taken back*)
How's that?

ELMIRA
It's all a mistake. Toady wasn't the kind to expose himself.

HINES
So I thought myself, Miss Fisher, but I was wrong. Toady, as you so lovingly call him, showed himself, when the crisis came, to be a man of honor fit to take his place beside the heroes of the past.

MARTY (*with a glance at the bedroom*)
Say, you could knock me down with a feather!

NATE
Where did it happen?

HINES
At Santa Maria del something-or-other, on the Mexican border, the company of United States Cavalry in which your son had enlisted—

ELMIRA
Now I know it's a mistake. Toady never rode a horse in his life.

HINES (*ignoring the interruption*)
I repeat, sir, his company crossed the river under a murderous fire to dislodge a party of snipers. At the

very foot of the enemy's position, Edward gloriously gave up his life for our beloved flag, the first American killed.

MARTY (*wiping his face with his handkerchief*)
Phew!

NATE
You're sure of what you're saying?

HINES
When you have been duly informed of your bereavement by the War Department, the remains will be shipped here for interment, via El Paso, Texas.

MARTY
I never was a funeral fan like Elmira, but this here corpse is one I'll take a heap of interest looking at.

ELMIRA (*to* MARTY)
You're a callous, unfeeling reptile.

HINES
I have no wish to add to your burden of affliction, but I warn you in advance that the features have been mutilated beyond recognition. He was identified only by the card sewed in his uniform.

MARTY (*slapping his knee as a light suddenly dawns on him*)
Haw, haw, haw! So that's it?

ELMIRA (*seizing* MARTY *by the collar*)
So that's what?

MARTY
Take your hands off me. I got a right to be upset by my grief the same as the rest of you, ain't I?

HINES

If I may be allowed to say so, your grief ought to be somewhat tempered by the knowledge that your loss has given the youth of America an example of noble and self-sacrificing courage.

NATE

I knew it.

MARTY

Eh?

NATE

Any son of mine was bound to have the right stuff in him. Yes, sir, I knew it all along.

MARTY

Well, I'll be damned!

NATE

And it's about time the nation waked up to what me and mine has done for it.

HINES

That's just the point I was coming to. We have decided, with your permission, Mr. Fisher, to hold a large public demonstration of pride and sorrow, a military funeral, the expenses of which, I am authorized to say, will be borne jointly by the *Bugle*, Congressman-elect Foss, and the Honorable Theodore Q. Wilkinson, our Democratic candidate for sheriff at the coming county elections.

MARTY

Seems to me the offer ain't to be sneezed at.

HINES

To be perfectly frank, that's the way I look at it.

NATE

No!

ELMIRA

You mean you ain't going to let them?

NATE

They can't pay me off cheap and make a good thing out of it for themselves at the same time.

HINES

Am I to understand—

NATE

You're to understand you can't make nothing off me. I've suffered enough for my country and been disowned by it. I ain't going to sit by and see my own son's funeral turned into a rally for the Democratic party that wouldn't lift a finger to get me my just rights. No, sir! He'll be buried with only family members and close personal friends attending, and if there's any credit coming, it ain't going to the bunch of political shysters that has turned me down.

HINES

I give you my word, Mr. Fisher—

MARTY

Nate's right for once. If he lets you pull votes for Ted Wilkinson and boom the circulation of the *Bugle,* there ought to be something in it besides brass bands and immortelles.

NATE

I've given my own flesh and blood that might have been a comfort and a support to me in my old age.

ELMIRA

It's no more'n right, they should do something for him.

HINES

I'm deeply pained by your attitude, deeply disappointed.

MARTY

It don't seem exactly fair we should deprive the Squire of a chance to make a couple of speeches.

HINES

The committee are at the *Bugle* office now, drafting a set of resolutions which we had intended to present later in the day. I feel, however, that under the circumstances, any further offer from us might be misunderstood.

MARTY

You needn't be shy about making a proposition. This ain't a sensitive family.

HINES (*to* NATE)

In that case, may I venture to suggest that if Mr. Foss would undertake to push your own claim for a pension and that if the *Bugle* would draft and circulate a petition endorsing it?—

ELMIRA

Do you mean that?

MARTY

There's sixteen hundred dollars of back pension due him, according to his own reckoning.

HINES

I dare say the government will not be niggardly in

its recognition of your brother's patriotic service when the facts are presented by the proper persons.

NATE

I ain't saying it's a bargain.

ELMIRA

If there was some way of fixing it so as Nate's pension was mentioned in the resolutions, and Mr. Foss couldn't crawl out of it afterwards.

MARTY

I always said that woman had ought to been a lawyer.

HINES

Well?

NATE

Mebbe if you could fix it like Elmira says.

HINES (*glancing at his watch*)

Done! A public funeral it is then. (*He has lost his unctuousness and the others have apparently lost sight of the gravity of the event upon which they are basing their bargain.*) I'll be back in fifteen minutes with the committee.

NATE

I ain't promising nothing yet.

HINES (*genially*)

That, sir, to put it vulgarly, is up to us. Good morning all.

(*He goes briskly out at the street door.* ELMIRA *goes to the window and looks after him.*)

ELMIRA (*thoughtfully*)

Eighty-seven dollars from sixteen hundred—

MARTY

I never thought twenty minutes ago I'd be the uncle of a hero and the brother of a bonyfide pensioned veteran.

(*He fills his pipe.*)

ELMIRA

Well, it won't benefit you none. You'll pay your keep out of what you can earn for yourself same as ever.

MARTY

Mebbe so; and then again, mebbe not

(*He strikes a match.*)

ELMIRA

Don't you dast light that pipe in here!

MARTY

Aw, close your face!

NATE

It's hard enough to lose an only son without hearing you two jawing each other.

MARTY

Yes, and mebbe it's a darn-sight harder 'n you think to lose a son like yours.

ELMIRA

What d'you mean by that?

MARTY

There's a little piece of business has got to be settled amongst ourselves before the Squire gets back with them resolutions.

NATE (*suspiciously*)

Eh?

MARTY (*going to the bedroom door and opening it*)
Hey! Come out of there.
(TOADY *appears in the doorway.* NATE *and* ELMIRA *regard him in speechless consternation.*)

TOADY
Howdy, pa.

NATE (*bitterly*)
So! You wasn't killed after all?

MARTY
At least his face ain't any worse mutilated than usual. Come on, Toady, don't be bashful. You ain't buried yet.

ELMIRA
I might have known there was some mistake.

NATE
Mistake nothing! It's a game they put up on me, the two of 'em. Yes, and Hines was in it, and Foss, and the hull damn bunch like as not.

TOADY
No, they wasn't.

MARTY
This here is just a quiet family funeral.
(*He begins turning the pages of the family album on the table.*)

NATE
I'll—I'll get even with you. I'll—

TOADY
There's gratitude for you.

ELMIRA
I like your impudence.

TOADY

It ain't every son has done as much for his old man as I've done for you, pa.

NATE

I'll call the constable and have you in jail. Yes, sir, and I'll have Marty—

MARTY

You needn't pay no further attention to me.

(*He extracts a photograph from the album and goes to the small table, where he opens a drawer and takes out a hammer and some tacks.*)

NATE (*to* TOADY)

You heard what I said. Now git!

TOADY

I ain't in no particular rush. You can't pin nothing on me. I'll tell 'em Aunt Elmira swiped your fifty dollars for the Baptist mission.

(MARTY *draws a chair to the side of the room, climbs on it, and begins tacking up the photograph in a conspicuous place.*)

ELMIRA

You're a deserter from the United States Army. They'll get you for that anyhow.

TOADY

Say, you make me laugh. When I heard old Heinie shooting off that bunk about me wading acrost the Rio Grandy with a flag in my mit, you could have butchered me with a dish-rag.

MARTY (*pointing with his hammer to the flags over* NATE'S *crayon portrait*)

Will you reach me them flags, Elmira, please?

ELMIRA (*turning*)

Eh? Land of Goshen, what are you doing on my best chair?

MARTY

Just putting up an old photo of the dear departed for his loving relatives to admire.

(*He gets down from the chair and goes for the flags himself.*)

TOADY

That's right. You'd ought to have a decorated picture of the hero of Santa Maria. I guess you can't jump over Uncle Marty for a sob artist.

ELMIRA (*advancing on* TOADY)

I'm going to get to the inside of this if I have to shake the skin off you.

TOADY

Hold on, will you, I'm busy. (*He turns to* MARTY, *who has returned with the flags and begun adjusting them.*) Say, unk, you're sticking them flags a little crooked.

NATE

If Hines and Foss ain't putting up a game on me, how'll I look when they find out?

TOADY

I guess that's something you got to figure out for yourself.

NATE

You've fixed my chances for a pension. It's a conspiracy!

ELMIRA

Yes, and Marty was in it.

MARTY

So help me, I never laid eyes on Toady till he came tapping at my window last night.

ELMIRA

You needn't tell me.

TOADY

If you all shut up, I'll give you the straight dope. On the level, I will.

MARTY

Make it short if you don't want your pa to have apoplexy.

TOADY

I met a feller in the park one night last winter.

ELMIRA

What park?

TOADY

Madison Square Park, New York City. He was a little red-headed feller with bow legs, and say but he had a bad eye, believe me! His name was Christian Dane O'Houlihan.

ELMIRA

What's that got to do with it?

TOADY

For cat's sake, who's telling this, me or you?

NATE

Let him alone.

TOADY

"Gee," I sez to him, "if I had a flossy label like yours, I bet I wouldn't have to be no free lunch hound."

"If you like it," he sez, "you're welcome to it. You can't do no worse with it than what I've done. If I had a nice plain name like Edward Martin Fisher, I'd go and enlist in the cavalry with it." "Go ahead," I sez, "you're on." So we swapped names and I got a job washing dishes in a dairy lunch.

MARTY

And the red-headed feller's getting shipped from Santa Maria via El Paso, Texas, to be buried at the expense of the local-option Democrats of Forkville, Indiana.

TOADY

I guess that's about the answer. My name was more unluckier than his'n.

ELMIRA

What did you come back for? Why couldn't you let the only sensible thing you ever done stay done?

TOADY

Oh, I got a heart all right. I almost had a mind to light out and keep my mouth shut when I saw how puffed up pa was over having me killed. I'd have done it, too, only I heard you driving that bargain with Hines about my funeral.

ELMIRA

Well, what do you want? I know you want something.

TOADY

I give you just one guess.

NATE

No, sir, I don't give him a cent. I'll be doing my

country another service by putting a crook like him behind the bars.

TOADY (*cheerfully*)

All right. Turn me up and blooie goes the pension.

MARTY

You sort of owe it to the family reputation, Nate, to keep him dead.

ELMIRA

If your pa gives you twenty-five dollars will you get out and leave us be?

TOADY

Come around to the other ear. You don't talk loud enough.

NATE

I tell you I won't be a party to no fraud.

ELMIRA

That ain't the question. When he's gone we can decide what's best according to our own conscience.

MARTY

I'd like to put some money on the way 'Miry's conscience'll jump.

ELMIRA (*to* TOADY, *paying no attention to* MARTY)

Suppose he makes it fifty dollars.

TOADY

What d'you take me for, a boob? I guess I know what me and the red-headed feller has done for pa all right. Twenty-five per cent cash. Them's my best terms. (*He turns and surveys the decorated portrait.*) Say, Uncle Marty, that looks swell.

ELMIRA

I never heard such gall in my life.

TOADY

I want four hundred dollars, or I'll walk down the street to Hopper's Hotel, and get drunk where the hull town'll see me.

NATE

That's a fine way for a son to talk to his father. Here's Hines and Foss come around to do the right thing after ten years' crookedness and just when it's all fixed up for me to get my just deserts—

MARTY

Hold on!

ELMIRA

Yes, and mebbe your pa'd have got his pension long ago except for your carryings on, putting everybody against us.

TOADY

Don't make me laugh. Everybody's heard how pa tried to buy a substitute when he was drafted only he couldn't raise the coin.

NATE

That's a lie, you blackmailing young skunk!

TOADY

I got my feelings the same as other people, and just for that word skunk it'll cost you an extra hundred before I leave this house.

MARTY

They'll be back here any minute with them resolutions.

NATE (*rising*)
I'll—I'll—

MARTY
You'll get your regular thirty a month all the same.

NATE (*to* TOADY)
I'll—I'll—take a stick to you. I'll beat you till there ain't a hull bone in your carcass.
(*He seizes his stick.*)

TOADY
All right, sail in. I could lick you with one hand, but I'll let you beat me if you want to.
(NATE *makes a move toward* TOADY.)

ELMIRA
For the love of heaven, Nate, be careful.

TOADY
Only for every belt you give me, I'll holler like the Bull of Basham. We'll have all the neighbors in here to see you basting the hero of Santa Maria.
(NATE *stands trembling with rage, the stick clenched in his hand.*)

MARTY
Walloping the corpse back to life'll settle things quick enough.
(*A band is heard faintly in the distance.* ELMIRA *puts her hand suddenly to her heart.*)

ELMIRA
Glory be! What's that?
(*They all listen a moment.*)

MARTY
It's Heinie coming back with his bandwagon load of pride and sorrow.

TOADY (*cheerfully*)
Well, pa, what's the good word?

NATE
You—you—

TOADY
I meant to be easy on you, but when they turn the court-house corner, I'll have to make it eight hundred for the suspense you're causing me.

NATE (*inarticulate with rage*)
You'll—you'll—
(*The music grows suddenly louder.*)

MARTY
There they go around the corner into Main Street.

ELMIRA (*wringing her hands*)
You better give in, Nate. Three-quarters is better'n nothing.

TOADY
It ain't three-quarters any longer. I've been reasonable and honest, but you've kind of pushed me too far. I've got to have eight hundred cold, iron dollars.

ELMIRA
We ain't got four hundred to our names, let alone eight hundred.
(*The band stops and there is only the sound of the drums tapping a slow march.*)

TOADY
I'll take one hundred in cash and pa's note for eight hundred, six months at seven per cent interest. Seven hundred to the order of Christian Dane O'Houlihan, that's me, for services rendered, and

the rest to Uncle Marty for acting as my agent How's that, Marty?

MARTY

Sounds fair to me.

TOADY

Marty can hold the notes and if they ain't taken up on the dot, I'll come back and we'll all get jugged together for defrauding the government.

MARTY (*at the window*)

You better decide pretty quick, Nate. They're almost in front of the house.

NATE

No, by God! You can't rob a man that's been honest all his life. I'll—

MARTY

They're stopping in the gate. Foss has got his plug hat on.

NATE

They ain't here any too quick to suit me. I'll have the both of you up for robbery and blackmail.

ELMIRA

You'd better think what you're doing, Nate.

NATE

That's fine advice for a deaconess to give, ain't it?

ELMIRA

I'm only thinking what's best in the end.

NATE

No, sir! I'm honest and I'll see you all damned before I'll—

TOADY (*soothingly*)

It's all right, pa. I know you ain't yourself. I'm going back in Uncle Marty's room and if you want to go through with it, the stuff's on. I mean it, I'll skin out to-night and stay a corpse. (*He picks up the bottle of beer from the table.*) Of course, if you want me to come and get pinched, all you got to do is call me.

NATE (*sullenly*)

I ain't saying what I'll do.

(*There is another knock.* TOADY *goes into the bedroom and closes the door softly.* ELMIRA *goes to the street door and opens it, disclosing* FOSS, HINES, *and* WILKINSON. FOSS *wears a frock coat and carries a silk hat in one hand and a roll of papers in the other. The three dignitaries advance into the room. Behind them is a group of neighbors framed in the doorway.* WILKINSON *shakes* NATE *by the hand rather abruptly and awkwardly.*)

WILKINSON (*attempting to come at once to the point*)

Howdy, Mr. Fisher. The Squire's (*he indicates* HINES *with a hitch of his thumb*) already put you wise to what we're here for.

HINES (*cutting in on* WILKINSON *and taking* NATE'S *reluctant hand*)

Quite so! (*He points to the decorated portrait.*) See, gentlemen, what loving hands have already done. Nothing we can say or do more sincerely voices the poignancy of this moment than those simple flags and that simple photograph

FOSS (*taking* NATE'S *hand in turn*)

In this room, sir, where the Hero of the Santa Maria

so recently lived and had his being—(*Marty glances apprehensively at the bodroom door*)—our sympathy must seem a poor and inadequate thing—

NATE

I ain't said I wanted your sympathy. I—

ELMIRA (*cutting in*)

Don't mind what he says, Mr. Foss. He's been that upset—

FOSS (*still wringing* NATE'S *hand*)

Spartan firmness, ma'am. I admire him for it.

WILKINSON

I'll just leave some of my campaign cards on your table in case the neighbors—

(HINES *shoots him an ugly look.*)

FOSS

We will not intrude on you long, Mr. Fisher. I have delegated myself—

WILKINSON

Been delegated.

FOSS

Been delegated by the citizens of Forkville to act as their spokesman on this solemn occasion and to read you these er—

(*He adjusts his eyeglasses.*)

WILKINSON

You'll find them o. k., Mr. Fisher.

HINES

We have inserted a clause explicitly recognizing your own patriotic services.

MARTY

D'you hear that, Nate?

NATE

Yes, I hear it. But I got something to say first.
(ELMIRA *plants a chair against the bedroom door and sits down in it.*)

FOSS (*unrolling his document*)

Spare yourself, my friend. We all know the strain you've been laboring under. Perhaps, later at the public demonstration—
(NATE *glances at him.*)

HINES

The Governor and Senator Tinblatter have wired us—

WILKINSON

Say, that's a fine stunt. A little talk, eh? Telling the folks how Edward was always a good Democrat.
(NATE *glares at him.*)

HINES

The Governor and Senator Tinblatter have wired us promising to speak. Perhaps after that.

ELMIRA

D'you hear, Nate? The Governor and Senator Tinblatter.

NATE

I ain't said there'd be no demonstration.

MARTY

You'll be getting telegrams from Washington next.

WILKINSON

You bet! Joe Finks is on the piazza now with a fist full.

(*A man steps forward from the group in the doorway and hands* NATE *a packet of yellow envelopes.* NATE *looks at them helplessly.*)

MARTY

The hull Democratic party's going to see this thing done up right.

FOSS (*clearing his throat and reading from the paper*)

We, the citizens of Forkville, Indiana, offer the following: Whereas, this day has become for us a day of er—

MARTY (*under his breath*)

Pride and sorrow.

ELMIRA (*to* MARTY)

Shut up!

FOSS

Whereas, facing his country's foes on foreign soil, Edward Martin Fisher, son of our respected citizen, Nathan Fisher, himself an intrepid defender of our national existence in the Civil War, yesterday gave up his life;

Whereas, by his courageous death and example, the said Edward Martin Fisher has performed an inestimable service to each and every one of us—

MARTY

That's right!

FOSS

Be it resolved, that we evidence our esteem and gratitude to the bereaved father by circulating an endorsement of his own claim to the proper and lawful pension heretofore unaccountably denied him by the national government.

And be it further and finally resolved, that Edward Martin Fisher be buried with full military honors and all other tokens of love and respect of which this city and the sovereign State of Indiana are capable.

(*Signed*) BERNARD P. FOSS,
Member of Congress.
JAMES MERRYWEATHER HINES,
THEODORE Q. WILKINSON,
Committee on Arrangements.

(FOSS *rolls up the paper.* ELMIRA, *unable to stand the tension, sobs in partial hysteria.* NATE'S *face has undergone various changes during the reading. He is rapidly losing his desire for revenge on* TOADY *under the influence of the adulation of his neighbors. He stands undecided, crumpling the telegrams in his hand.*)

WILKINSON
I guess that about covers it.
(*They all regard* NATE *as if expecting a definite answer.*)

MARTY (*seeing that* NATE *has practically given in*)
You better say something, Nate.

NATE
I—I don't know exactly how to put it, gentlemen—

MARTY
You was mighty keen to talk a minute ago.

ELMIRA (*between her sobs, afraid that* MARTY *may spoil everything*)
Let him alone, can't you?

NATE
It's all come on me sort of sudden-like, but I guess

I know what I done for the United States—yes, and what my son Edward done for 'em, too

THE CROWD IN THE DOORWAY

Hear! Hear!

NATE

I'd kind of set my heart on a—a—

MARTY

A quiet, family funeral—

FOSS

Exactly, but under the circumstances—

NATE

It ain't for me to set myself up against what's expected of me.

WILKINSON (*extending his hand*)

Put it here, Mr. Fisher.

HINES

Then we're to understand?

NATE

I reckon I got to accept your resolutions.

FOSS (*shaking* NATE *by the hand*)

I can see how, sir, that your son was a chip off the old block.

MARTY

That's about the truest thing anybody's said yet.

(1)

CURTAIN

A Variety of Plays Suitable for Little Theatres

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By Kenyon Nicholson

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Authorized Translation by Barrett H. Clark

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